

POMEGRANATES
FROM AN ENGLISH
GARDEN

ROBERT BROWNING



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Pomegranates from an English
garden, a selection from the poems of
Robert Browning



Oliver J. Trumble
1886.

POMEGRANATES
FROM AN ENGLISH GARDEN:

A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS OF
ROBERT BROWNING.

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
JOHN MONRO GIBSON.

"Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate,' which, if cut
deep down the middle,
Shows a heart within, blood-tinctured, of a veined
humanity."

Lady Geraldine's Courtship.

NEW YORK:
CHAUTAUQUA PRESS,
C. L. S. C. Department.

1885.

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INTRODUCTORY.

THE name of Robert Browning has been before the world now for fifty years. For the greater part of the time his work has had so little recognition, that one marvels at his courage in going so steadily on with it. His "Pomegranates" have been produced year after year, decade after decade, in unfailing abundance ; and, while critics have kept paring at the rind, and the general public has not even asked if there was anything beneath it, he has laboured on with unremitting energy, calmly awaiting the time when "the heart within, blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity," should be at length discovered. It can scarcely be said, even yet, that that time has come ; but it is coming fast. Already he is something more than "the poet's poet." Few intelligent people now are content to know one of the master minds of the age simply as the author of "The Pied Piper of Hamelin," as if that were the only thing he had written worth reading !

That the form in which the thought of Browning is cast is altogether admirable, is what none but his most indiscriminating admirers will assert. It is often, unquestionably, rough and forbidding. But there is strength even in its ruggedness ; and in its entire freedom from conventionality there is a charm such as one enjoys in wild mountain scenery, even though only in little patches it may have any suggestion of the garden or the lawn. There are those who have charged the poet with affectation of the uncouth and the bizarre ; but careful reading will, we think, render it apparent that it is rather his utter freedom from affectation which determines and perpetuates the peculiarities and oddities of his style ; that, in fact, the aphorism of Buffon, "*le*

style est l'homme même," is undoubtedly true as applied to him. It would, of course, be absurd to claim for the pomegranate the bloom and beauty of the peach ; but, equally with the other, it is Nature's gift, and to toss aside a rough-rinded fruit because it needs to be " cut deep down the middle " before its pulp and juices can be reached, is surely far from wise. Even hard nuts are not to be despised, if the kernels are good ; and as to Browning's " nuts," we have this to say, that not only are they well worth cracking, but there is in the process excellent exercise for the teeth.

This brings us to the alleged " obscurity " of Browning's writings, which still continues to be the main obstacle to their general appreciation. It is freely admitted that often it is not quite easy, and sometimes very difficult, to understand him ; and it is hard for most people to see why he could not make his meaning plainer, and matter for regret to many, who heartily admire him, that he has not done so. That he has taken some pains to this end is evident from what he says in the preface to "*Sordello*," written for an edition issued in 1863, twenty-three years after its original publication : " My own faults of expression were many. . . . I blame nobody, least of all myself, who did my best then and since, for I lately gave time and pains to turn my work into what the many might—instead of what the few must—like." In a later preface (1872) he says, " Nor do I apprehend any more charges of being wilfully obscure, unconscientiously careless, or perversely harsh." The true explanation of it seems to be what we have already suggested, that he does not think of his audience as he writes, his only care being to express the thought in the way which comes most natural to him. As a dramatist, he can throw himself with abandonment into the persons he represents ; but he never seems to think of putting himself in the position of a listener, or, if he does, he assumes too readily that he has a mind of similar texture and grasp to his own. On the other hand, it is fair to say that the difficulty of understanding him arises in great part from the very excel-

lence of his work. The following considerations will illustrate what we mean :—

1. His work is full of *thought*, and the thought is never commonplace. There is so much of it, and all is so fresh, and therefore unfamiliar, that some mental effort is necessary to grasp it. The following characteristic remark of Bishop Butler, in his preface to the famous Fifteen Sermons, is worth consideration in this connection: "It must be acknowledged that some of the following Discourses are very abstruse and difficult; or, if you please, obscure; but I must take leave to add that those alone are judges, whether or no and how far this is a fault, who are judges, whether or no and how far it might have been avoided—those only who will be at the trouble to understand what is here said, and to see how far the things here insisted upon, and not other things, might have been put in a plainer manner; which yet I am very far from asserting that they could not."

2. The expression is always the briefest. Not only are no words wasted, but, where connecting ideas are easily supplied, they are often left unexpressed, the intelligence and mental activity of the reader being always taken for granted.

3. The poems are, for the most part, dramatic in principle. The reader is brought face to face with some soul, in its thoughts and emotions, frequently in the very process of the thinking and the feeling. The poet has stepped aside, and of course supplies no key. The author does not appear, like the chorus in a Greek play, to point a moral or explain the situation. The *dramatis personæ* must explain themselves. And, just as Shakespeare must be *studied* in order to an appreciation other than second-hand, so must Browning be studied in order to be appreciated at all; for his writings are not yet old enough to secure much second-hand enthusiasm.

4. The wealth of allusion is another source of difficulty. The learning of our poet is encyclopædic; and though there is no display of it, there is large use of it; and it often happens that

passages or phrases, which seem crabbed or obscure, require only the knowledge of some unfamiliar fact in science or in history, or it may be something not readily thought of, and yet within easy range of a keen enough observation, to light them up and reveal unsuspected strength or beauty.

Before leaving the subject of the rough and often tough exterior of Browning's work, it may be interesting to refer to the characteristic illustration of it he has lately given us in the prologue to "*Ferishtah's Fancies*," his most recent work. He begins by asking the reader whether he has ever "eaten ortolans in Italy," and then goes on to describe the preparation of them. The following lines will show the use he makes of the illustration :

"First comes plain bread, crisp, brown, a toasted square ;
 Then, a strong sage-leaf ;
 (So we find books with flowers dried here and there
 Lest leaf engage leaf.)
 First, food—then, piquancy—and last of all
 Follows the thirdling ;
 Through wholesome hard, sharp soft, your tooth must bite
 Ere reach the birdling.
 Now, were there only crust to crunch, you'd wince :
 Unpalatable !
 Sage-leaf is bitter-pungent—so's a quince ;
 Eat each who's able !
 But through all three bite boldly—lo, the gust !
 Flavour—no fixture—
 Flies permeating flesh and leaf and crust
 In fine admixture.
 So with your meal, my poem ; masticate
 Sense, sight and song there !
 Digest these, and I praise your peptics' state,
 Nothing found wrong there."

This extract also furnishes an example of the strange rhymes in which the poet sometimes indulges, with what appears too little refinement of taste.

The themes of Browning's poetry are the very greatest that can engage the thought of man. He ranges over a vast variety of topic ; but, wherever his thought may lead him, he never

loses sight of that which is to him the centre of all, the human soul, with its infinite wants and capabilities. In the preface to "Sordello" he says : "The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires ; and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul : little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so." To this principle he has kept true through all his work ; and hence it is that, whether the particular subject be love, or home, or country ; poetry, painting, or music ; life, death, or immortality ; it is dealt with in its relation to "the development of a soul." Hence it is that his poetry is so thoroughly and profoundly spiritual, and so exceedingly valuable as a counteractive to the materialism of the age, which ever tends to merge the soul in the body, and swallow up the real in mere phenomena.

As might be expected of one who deals so profoundly with all that he touches, the great reality of the universe to him is God. Agnosticism has little mercy at his hands ; if a man knows anything at all, he knows God. And the God whom he knows is not a God apart, looking down from some infinite or indefinite height upon the world, but one in whom all live and move and have their being. Out of this springs, of course, the hope of immortality, and also that bright and cheerful view of life so completely opposed to the dark pessimism to which much of the unbelieving speculation of the present day so painfully tends. The dark things of human life and destiny are by no means ignored ; rather are they dwelt on with a painful and sometimes frightful realism ; but even amid deepest darkness the light above is never quite extinguished, and some little "Pippa passes" singing :

"The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn ;
Morning's at seven ;
The hill-side's dew-pearled ;
The lark's on the wing ;
The snail's on the thorn :
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world."

There has been much discussion as to Browning's personal attitude to Christianity. The profoundly Christian tone of his writings is, of course, universally acknowledged ; but attempts are sometimes made to evade the force of those numerous passages in which he speaks of the Incarnation, and Death, and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus, in a way which seems to imply his hearty acceptance of the substance of what is known as evangelical truth. Much has been made in this connection of the way in which, in one of his prefaces, he characterises his work as "poetry always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine ;" and it has been asserted that it is as unwarrantable to consider him to be speaking his own sentiments in a poem like "Christmas Eve," as in one like "Johannes Agricola," or "Bishop Blougram's Apology." The obvious answer is that this profound sympathy with the Christ of God and His salvation is not found in some solitary production, but appears and reappears, often when least expected, all through his works. In that remarkable little poem, entitled "House," in which more strongly than anywhere else he claims personal privacy, while he declines to be regarded as having furnished his publishers with tickets to view his own soul's dwelling, he admits that "whoso desires to penetrate deeper" may do so "by the spirit sense ;" and accordingly some of his admirers, who dissent from him most strongly on this point, are the most ready to acknowledge that his Christian faith is no stage suit, but the very garment of his soul. As illustration of this we may refer to the admirable essay by the late James Thomson, published in Part II. of the Browning Society's Papers, in which, after expressing his amazement that a great mind like Browning's could be Christian, he asserts the, to him, remarkable but quite undeniable fact in these words : "The devout and hopeful Christian faith, explicitly or implicitly affirmed in such poems as *Saul*, *Kharshish*, *Cleon*, *Caliban upon Setebos*, *A Death in the Desert*, *Instans Tyrannus*, *Rabbi Ben Ezra*,

Prospice, the *Epilogue*, and throughout that stupendous monumental work, *The Ring and the Book*, must surely be as clear as noonday to even the most purblind vision."

That a great Christian poet, in an age when so many of the intellectual magnates of the time are hostile or simply silent, should remain unknown or little known to any large proportion of Christian readers, is certainly very much to be regretted. Surely the admiration which is freely and generously accorded to his work by many who are constrained to it in spite of his faith in a Christ whom they reject, is a rebuke to the indifference of those who, sharing his faith, do not give themselves the trouble to inquire what he has to say about it. There are not so many avowed and outspoken Christians in the highest walks of literature that we can afford to pay only slight attention to the utterances of one who has the ear of the deepest thinkers in every school of thought all the world over.

The immediate object of this selection is to supply an introduction to the study of Browning for the benefit of the readers of the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle; but it is hoped that many others, inspired with similar aims, and who have not had such advantages that they can dispense with all assistance in the study of a difficult author, may find help from this little book. It is, of course, better to read for one's self than to follow the guidance of another; and yet it may be necessary to open a path far enough to lead within sight of the treasures in store. This is all that has been attempted here—only the indication of a few veins near the surface of a rich mine, which the reader is strongly recommended to explore for himself.

The selection has been arranged on the principle of beginning with that which is simple, and proceeding gradually to the more complex, with some regard also to variety and progress in subjects, and at the same time to appropriateness for the use of those younger readers for whom this selection mainly is intended.

The notes are meant to serve only as a guide to beginners;

and as guides are proverbially an annoyance when their services are imposed unsought, these are disposed at the end of each poem, and without reference marks to mar the pages, so that the selection may be read, if desired, without any interference from the notes.

Within the limits of a volume like this, only the shorter poems could find a place. Most valuable extracts from the longer works might have been given ; but this is always a questionable method of dealing with the best writers, with those especially whose thought is strictly consecutive, while the effect of particular passages depends to a large extent on their setting and their relation to the work as a whole. The only* exception to this is the treatment of "Christmas Eve and Easter Day," with extracts from which this volume closes. That remarkable work occupies a middle position between the shorter and the longer poems of our author ; and, though too long for insertion entire, is yet so important, that it seemed very desirable to give some idea of it. In furnishing a series of extracts from this work, an attempt has been made to reduce the disadvantage above referred to by supplying along with them a slight sketch or "argument," so as to give some idea, to those unacquainted with it, of the course of thought throughout.

It is right to say that Mr. Browning has given his kind permission for the publication in the United States of this Selection, and also of the Notes, for which, however, as for the selection itself, he is in no wise responsible.

* It has been found necessary also to give only the latter part of the noble poem "Saul." A slight sketch of the part omitted is given, and the poem is continued without interruption to its close.

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A SELECTION FROM THE POEMS
OF ROBERT BROWNING.



HOME THOUGHTS, FROM ABROAD.

OH, to be in England now that April's there,
And whoever wakes in England sees, some morning, unaware,
That the lowest boughs and the brushwood sheaf
Round the elm-tree bole are in tiny leaf,
While the chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England—now !
And after April, when May follows,
And the white-throat builds, and all the swallows !
Hark, where my blossomed pear-tree in the hedge
Leans to the field and scatters on the clover
Blossoms and dewdrops—at the bent spray's edge—
That 's the wise thrush ; he sings each song twice over
Lest you should think he never could recapture
The first fine careless rapture !
And, though the fields look rough with hoary dew,
All will be gay when noontide wakes anew
The buttercups, the little children's dower
—Far brighter than this gaudy melon-flower !

HOME THOUGHTS, FROM THE SEA.

NOBLY, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the North-West died
away ;

Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay ;
Bluish 'mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;
In the dimmest North-East distance dawned Gibraltar grand
and grey ;

"Here and here did England help me : how can I help
England ?"—say,

Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and
pray,

While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

The former of these companion poems may have been written from Italy or the south of Spain, as would appear from the last line of it. Mr. E. C. Stedman, one of the severest of Browning's appreciative critics, commenting (in his "Victorian Poets") on the lines beginning "That's the wise thrush," says:—"Having in mind Shakespeare and Shelley, I nevertheless think these three lines the finest ever written touching the song of a bird."

In the latter poem, the course is from the southern point of Portugal through the Straits. "Here and here"—the reference is to the battles of Cape St. Vincent (1796) and Trafalgar (1805), and perhaps to the defence of Gibraltar (1782).

“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD
NEWS FROM GHENT TO AIX.”

[16—.]

I.

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three ;
“Good speed !” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts undrew ;
“Speed !” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

II.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place ;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique right,
Rebuckled the cheek-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

III.

T was moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;
At Düffeld, 't was morning as plain as could be ;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-chime,
So, Joris broke silence with, “Yet there is time !”

IV.

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
 And against him the cattle stood black every one,
 To stare thro' the mist at us galloping past,
 And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
 With resolute shoulders, each butting away
 The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

V.

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
 For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
 And one eye's black intelligence,—ever that glance
 O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
 And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
 His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

VI.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, " Stay spur !
 "Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
 "We'll remember at Aix"—for one heard the quick wheeze
 Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering knees,
 And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
 As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.

VII.

So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
 Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;
 The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like chaff ;
 Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
 And " Gallop," gasped Joris, " for Aix is in sight !"

VIII.

'How they'll greet us!'—and all in a moment his roan
Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone ;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her fate,
With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

IX.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without peer ;
Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad or good,
Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

X.

And all I remember is, friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground ;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news from
Ghent.

The indefiniteness of the date at the head of this poem will be best explained by the following extract from a letter of Mr. Browning's, published in 1881 in the *Boston Literary World* :—

"There is no sort of historical foundation about 'Good News From Ghent.' I wrote it under the bulwark of a vessel off the African coast, after I had been at sea long enough to appreciate even the fancy of a gallop on the back of a certain good horse 'York,' then in my stable at home."

This poem, therefore, widely known and appreciated as one of the most stirring in the language, may be regarded as a living picture to illustrate the pages—no page in particular—of Motley.

As parallels in American literature, reference may be made to "Paul Revere's Ride," by Longfellow, and "Sheridan's Ride," by T. B. Reade.

ECHETLOS.

HERE is a story, shall stir you ! Stand up, Greeks dead and
 . gone,
 Who breasted, beat Barbarians, stemmed Persia rolling on;
 Did the deed and saved the world, since the day was
 Marathon !

No man but did his manliest, kept rank and fought away
 In his tribe and file : up, back, out, down—was the spear-
 arm play :
 Like a wind-whipt branchy wood, all spear-arms a-swing that
 day !

But one man kept no rank, and his sole arm plied no spear,
 As a flashing came and went, and a form i' the van, the rear,
 Brightened the battle up, for he blazed now there, now here.

Nor helmed nor shielded, he ! but, a goat-skin all his wear,
 Like a tiller of the soil, with a clown's limbs broad and bare,
 Went he ploughing on and on : he pushed with a plough-
 man's share.

Did the weak mid-line give way, as tunnies on whom the
 shark

Precipitates his bulk ? Did the right-wing halt when, stark
 On his heap of slain, lay stretched Kallimachos Polemarch ?

Did the steady phalanx falter ? To the rescue, at the need,
 The clown was ploughing Persia, clearing Greek earth of
 weed,

As he routed through the Sakian and rooted up the Med

But the deed done, battle won,—nowhere to be descried
On the meadow, by the stream, at the marsh,—look far and
wide

From the foot of the mountain, no, to the last bloodplashed
sea-side,—

Not anywhere on view blazed the large limbs thonged and
brown,

Shearing and clearing still with the share before which—
down

To the dust went Persia's pomp, as he ploughed for Greece,
that clown!

How spake the Oracle? "Care for no name at all!

Say but just this: We praise one helpful whom we call
The Holder of the Ploughshare. The great deed ne'er
grows small."

Not the great name! Sing—woe for the great name Miltiadés,
And its end at Paros isle! Woe for Themistokles—

Satrap in Sardis court! Name not the clown like these!

The name, Echetlos, is derived from ἐχέτλη, a plough handle. It is not strictly a proper name, but an appellative, meaning "the Holder of the Ploughshare." The story is found in Pausanias, author of the "Itinerary of Greece" (I, 15, 32). Nothing further is necessary in order to understand this little poem and appreciate its rugged strength than familiarity with the battle of Marathon, and some knowledge of Miltiades and Themistocles, the one known as the hero of Marathon, and the other as the hero of Salamis. The lesson of the poem ("The great deed ne'er grows small, not the great name!") is taught in a way not likely to be forgotten. One is reminded of another, who wished to be nameless, heard only as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness!"

The ellipsis in thought between the eighth and ninth stanzas is so easily supplied that it is noticed here only as a simple illustration of what is sometimes the occasion of difficulty (see Introduction, p. iii). It would only have lengthened the poem and weakened it to have inserted a stanza telling in so many words that when the hero could not be found, a message was sent to the Oracle to enquire who it could be.

As a companion to "Echetlos" may be read the stirring poem of "Hervé Riel."

HELEN'S TOWER.

Ἑλένη ἐπὶ πύργῳ.

WHO hears of Helen's Tower, may dream perchance,
 How the Greek Beauty from the Scæan Gate
 Gazed on old friends unanimous in hate,
 Death-doom'd because of her fair countenance.

Hearts would leap otherwise, at thy advance,
 Lady, to whom this Tower is consecrate :
 Like hers, thy face once made all eyes elate,
 Yet, unlike hers, was bless'd by every glance.

The Tower of Hate is outworn, far and strange :
 A transitory shame of long ago,
 It dies into the sand from which it sprang :
 But thine, Love's rock-built Tower, shall fear no change :
 God's self laid stable Earth's foundations so,
 When all the morning-stars together sang.

The tower is one built by Lord Dufferin, in memory of his mother Helen, Countess of Gifford, on one of his estates in Ireland. "The Greek Beauty" is, of course, Helen of Troy, and the reference in the alternative heading is apparently to that fine passage in the third book of the "Iliad," where Helen meets the Trojan chiefs at the Scæan Gate (see line 154, which speaks of "Helen at the Tower").

On the last two lines, founded of course on the well-known passage in Job (xxxviii. 4-7), compare Dante :

"E il sol montava in su con quelle stelle
 Ch'eran con lui, quando l'Amor Divino
 Mosse da prima quelle cose belle."

"Aloft the sun ascended with those stars
 That with him rose, when Love Divine first moved
 'Those its fair works."

—*Inferno* I. 38-40.

S H O P.

I.

So, friend, your shop was all your house !
 Its front, astonishing the street,
 Invited view from man and mouse
 To what diversity of treat
 Behind its glass—the single sheet !

II.

What gimcracks, genuine Japanese :
 Gape-jaw and goggle-eye, the frog ;
 Dragons, owls, monkeys, beetles, geese ;
 Some crush-nosed human-hearted dog :
 Queer names, too, such a catalogue !

III.

I thought “ And he who owns the wealth
 “ Which blocks the window’s vastitude,
 “ —Ah, could I peep at him by stealth
 “ Behind his ware, pass shop, intrude
 “ On house itself, what scenes were viewed !

IV.

“ If wide and showy thus the shop,
 “ What must the habitation prove ?
 “ The true house with no name a-top—
 “ The mansion, distant one remove,
 “ Once get him off his traffic groove !

V.

" Pictures he likes, or books perhaps ;
 " And as for buying most and best,
 " Commend me to these city chaps :
 " Or else he 's social, takes his rest
 " On Sundays, with a Lord for guest.

VI.

" Some suburb-palace, parked about
 " And gated grandly, built last year :
 " The four-mile walk to keep off gout ;
 " Or big seat sold by bankrupt peer :
 " But then he takes the rail, that 's clear.

VII.

" Or, stop ! I wager, taste selects
 " Some out o' the way, some all-unknown
 " Retreat : the neighbourhood suspects
 " Little that he who rambles lone
 " Makes Rothschild tremble on his throne ! "

VIII.

Nowise ! Nor Mayfair residence
 Fit to receive and entertain,—
 Nor Hampstead villa's kind defence
 From noise and crowd, from dust and drain,—
 Nor country-box was soul's domain !

IX.

Nowise! At back of all that spread
 Of merchandize, woe 's me, I find
 A hole i' the wall where, heels by head,
 The owner couched, his ware behind,
 —In cupboard suited to his mind.

X.

For, why? He saw no use of life
 But, while he drove a roaring trade,
 To chuckle "Customers are rife!"
 To chafe "So much hard cash outlaid
 "Yet zero in my profits made!"

XI.

"This novelty costs pains, but—takes?
 "Cumbers my counter! Stock no more!
 "This article, no such great shakes,
 "Fizzes like wild fire? Underscore
 "The cheap thing—thousands to the fore!"

XII.

'T was lodging best to live most nigh
 (Cramp, coffinlike as crib might be)
 Receipt of Custom; ear and eye
 Wanted no outworld: "Hear and see
 "The bustle in the shop!" quoth he.

XIII.

My fancy of a merchant-prince
 Was different. Through his wares we groped
 Our darkling way to—not to mince
 The matter—no black den where moped
 The master if we interloped !

XIV.

Shop was shop only : household-stuff ?
 What did he want with comforts there ?
 “ Walls, ceiling, floor, stay blank and rough,
 “ So goods on sale show rich and rare !
 “ *Sell and scud home,*” be shop’s affair !

XV.

What might he deal in ? Gems, suppose !
 Since somehow business must be done
 At cost of trouble,—see, he throws
 You choice of jewels, everyone
 Good, better, best, star, moon and sun !

XVI.

Which lies within your power of purse ?
 This ruby that would tip aright
 Solomon’s sceptre ? Oh, your nurse
 Wants simply coral, the delight
 Of teething baby,—stuff to bite !

XVII.

Howe'er your choice fell, straight you took
 Your purchase, prompt your money rang
 On counter,—scarce the man forsook
 His study of the "Times," just swang
 Till-ward his hand that stopped the clang,—

XVIII.

Then off made buyer with a prize,
 Then seller to his "Times" returned,
 And so did day wear, wear, till eyes
 Brightened apace, for rest was earned :
 He locked door long ere candle burned.

XIX.

- And whither went he? Ask himself,
 Not me! To change of scene, I think.
 Once sold the ware and pursed the pelf,
 Chaffer was scarce his meat and drink,
 Nor all his music—money-chink.

XX.

Because a man has shop to mind
 In time and place, since flesh must live,
 Needs spirit lack all life behind,
 All stray thoughts, fancies fugitive,
 All loves except what trade can give?

XXI.

I want to know a butcher paints,
 A baker rhymes for his pursuit,
 Candlestick-maker much acquaints
 His soul with song, or, haply mute,
 Blows out his brains upon the flute!

XXII.

But -shop each day and all day long!
 Friend, your good angel slept, your star
 Suffered eclipse, fate did you wrong!
 From where these sorts of treasures are,
 There should our hearts be—Christ, how far!

There ought to be far more in a man than can be put into a front window. This man had all sorts of "curios" in his shop window, but there was nothing rich or rare in his soul; and so there was room for all of *him* in a den which would not have held the hundredth part of his wares. The contemptible manner of the man's life is strikingly brought out by the various suppositions (stanzas 5, 6, 7) so different from the poor reality (8—9). All he cared for was business, which made him "chuckle" on the one hand or "chafe" on the other, according as times were good or bad (10). Even in his business it was not the real excellence of his wares he cared for, only their saleability (11). A merchant prince is a very different person (13—19). The last three stanzas give the lesson in a style partly humorous, but passing in the end to an impressive solemnity.

In connection with this should be read the companion piece, "House," to which reference is made in the Introduction.

THE BOY AND THE ANGEL.

MORNING, evening, noon and night,
 "Praise God!" sang Theocrite.

Then to his poor trade he turned,
 Whereby the daily meal was earned.

Hard he laboured, long and well;
 O'er his work the boy's curls fell.

But ever, at each period,
 He stopped and sang, "Praise God!"

Then back again his curls he threw,
 And cheerful turned to work anew.

Said Blaise, the listening monk, "Well done;
 "I doubt not thou art heard, my son:

"As well as if thy voice to-day
 "Were praising God, the Pope's great way.

"This Easter Day, the Pope at Rome
 "Praises God from Peter's dome."

Said Theocrite, "Would God that I
 "Might praise Him, that great way, and die!"

Night passed, day shone,
 And Theocrite was gone.

With God a day endures alway,
A thousand years are but a day.

God said in heaven, "Nor day nor night
"Now brings the voice of my delight."

Then Gabriel, like a rainbow's birth,
Spread his wings and sank to earth ;

Entered, in flesh, the empty cell,
Lived there, and played the craftsman well ;

And morning, evening, noon and night,
Praised God in place of Theocrite.

And from a boy, to youth he grew :
The man put off the stripling's hue :

The man matured and fell away
Into the season of decay :

And ever o'er the trade he bent,
And ever lived on earth content.

(He did God's will ; to him, all one
If on the earth or in the sun.)

God said, "A praise is in mine ear ;
"There is no doubt in it, no fear :

"So sing old worlds, and so
"New worlds that from my footstool go.

“Clearer loves sound other ways :
 “I miss my little human praise.”

Then forth sprang Gabriel's wings, off fell
 The flesh disguise, remained the cell.

'T was Easter Day : He flew to Rome,
 And paused above Saint Peter's dome.

In the tiring-room close by
 The great outer gallery,

With his holy vestments dight,
 Stood the new Pope, Theocrite :

And all his past career
 Came back upon him clear,

Since when, a boy, he plied his trade,
 Till on his life the sickness weighed ;

And in his cell, when death drew near,
 An angel in a dream brought cheer :

And, rising from the sickness drear,
 He grew a priest, and now stood here.

To the East with praise he turned,
 And on his sight the angel burned.

“I bore thee from thy craftsman's cell,
 “And set thee here ; I did not weft.

"Vainly I left my angel-sphere,
 "Vain was thy dream of many a year.

"Thy voice's praise seemed weak ; it dropped—
 "Creation's chorus stopped !

"Go back and praise again
 "The early way, while I remain.

"With that weak voice of our disdain,
 "Take up creation's pausing strain.

"Back to the cell and poor employ :
 "Resume the craftsman and the boy !"

Theocrite grew old at home ;
 A new Pope dwelt in Peter's dome.

One vanished as the other died :
 They sought God side by side.

The lesson of this beautiful fancy is the complement of the "Shop" lesson. Even drudgery may be divine ; since the will of God is the work to be done, no matter whether under St. Peter's dome or in the cell of the craftsman (the Boy)—"all one, if on the earth or in the sun" (the Angel).

The poem is so full of exquisite things, that only a few can be noted. The value of the "little human praise" to God Himself (distich 12), all the dearer because of the doubts and fears in it (20--22) ; and the contrast between its seeming weakness and insignificance and its real importance as a necessary part of the great chorus of creation (34) ; the eager desire of Gabriel to anticipate the will of God, and his content to live on earth and bend over a common trade, if only thus he can serve Him best (13--19) ; and again the content of the "new pope Theocrite" to go back to his "cell and poor employ" and fill out the measure of his day of service, growing old at home, while Gabriel as contentedly takes his place as pope (probably a harder trial than the more menial service) and waits for the time when both "sought God side by side"—these are some of the fine and far reaching thoughts which find simple and beautiful expression here.

Longfellow's "King Robert of Sicily," though not really parallel, has points of similarity to "The Boy and the Angel."

THE PATRIOT.

AN OLD STORY.

I.

It was roses, roses, all the way,
 With myrtle mixed in my path like mad :
 The house-roofs seemed to heave and sway,
 The church-spires flamed, such flags they had,
 A year ago on this very day.

II.

The air broke into a mist with bells,
 The old walls rocked with the crowd and cries.
 Had I said, " Good folk, mere noise repels—
 " But give me your sun from yonder skies !"
 They had answered " And afterward, what else ?"

III.

Alack, it was I who leaped at the sun
 To give it my loving friends to keep !
 Nought man could do, have I left undone :
 And you see my harvest, what I reap
 This very day, now a year is run.

IV.

There 's nobody on the house-tops now—
 Just a palsied few at the windows set ;
 For the best of the sight is, all allow,
 At the Shambles' Gate—or, better yet,
 By the very scaffold's foot, I trow.

V.

I go in the rain, and, more than needs,
 A rope cuts both my wrists behind ,
 And I think, by the feel, my forehead bleeds,
 For they fling, whoever has a mind,
 Stones at me for my year's misdeeds.

VI.

Thus I entered, and thus I go !
 In triumphs, people have dropped down dead.
 " Paid by the world, what dost thou owe
 Me ?"—God might question ; now instead,
 'T is God shall repay : I am safer so.

The Patriot, on his way to the scaffold, surrounded by a hooting crowd, remembers how, just a year ago, the same people had been mad in their enthusiasm for him. Anything at all, however extravagant, would have been too little for them to do for him (stanza 2; cf. Gal. iv. 15, 16); but now——! The fourth stanza is very powerful. All have gone who can, to be ready to see the execution; only the "palsied few," who cannot, are at the windows to see him pass. In the last stanza the thought of a more sudden contrast still is presented. A man may drop dead in the midst of a triumph, to find that in its brief plaudits he has his reward, while a vast account stands against him at the higher tribunal. Far better die amid the execrations of men and find the contrast reversed.

It is "an old story," and therefore general; but one naturally thinks of such cases as Arnold of Brescia, or the tribune Rienzi. A higher Name than these need not be introduced here, in proof of the people's fickleness!

INSTANS TYRANNUS.

I.

OF the million or two, more or less,
 I rule and possess,
 One man, for some cause undefined,
 Was least to my mind.

II.

I struck him, he grovelled of course—
 For, what was his force?
 I pinned him to earth with my weight
 And persistence of hate ;
 And he lay, would not moan, would not curse,
 As his lot might be worse.

III.

“Were the object less mean, would he stand
 “At the swing of my hand !
 “For obscurity helps him, and blots
 “The hole where he squats.”
 So, I set my five wits on the stretch
 To inveigle the wretch.
 All in vain ! Gold and jewels I threw
 Still he couched there perdue ;
 I tempted his blood and his flesh,
 Hid in roses my mesh,
 Choicest cates and the flagon’s best spilth
 Still he kept to his filth.

IV.

Had he kith now or kin, were access
 To his heart, did I press ·
 Just a son or a mother to seize !
 No such booty as these.
 Were it simply a friend to pursue
 'Mid my million or two,
 Who could pay me, in person or pelf,
 What he owes me himself !
 No : I could not but smile through my chafe :
 For the fellow lay safe
 As his mates do, the midge and the nit,
 —Through minuteness, to wit.

V.

Then a humour more great took its place
 At the thought of his face :
 The droop, the low cares of the mouth,
 The trouble uncouth
 'Twixt the brows, all that air one is fain
 To put out of its pain.
 And, “no !” I admonished myself,
 “Is one mocked by an elf,
 “Is one baffled by toad or by rat ?
 “The gravamen 's in that !
 “How the lion, who crouches to suit
 “His back to my foot,
 “Would admire that I stand in debate !
 “But the small turns the great
 “If it vexes you,—that is the thing !
 “Toad or rat vex the king ?
 “Though I waste half my realm to unearth
 “Toad or rat, 't is well worth !”

VI.

So, I soberly laid my last plan
 To extinguish the man.
 Round his creep-hole, with never a break
 Ran my fires for his sake ;
 Over-head, did my thunder combine
 With my under-ground mine :
 Till I looked from my labour content
 To enjoy the event.

VII.

When sudden . . . how think ye, the end ?
 Did I say "without friend ?"
 Say rather from marge to blue marge
 The whole sky grew his targe
 With the sun's self for visible boss,
 While an Arm ran across
 Which the earth heaved beneath like a breast
 Where the wretch was safe prest !
 Do you see ! Just my vengeance complete,
 The man sprang to his feet,
 Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed !
 —So, *I* was afraid !

"Instans Tyrannus," the *present* tyrant, the tyrant for the time only, whose apparently illimitable power to hurt shrivels into nothing in presence of the King of kings, whose dominion is everlasting.

The poor victim of this tyrant's oppression is a true child of God, but the nobility of his inner life is of course concealed from the proud wretch who despises him, and who, it must be remembered, is the speaker throughout. We must be careful, therefore, to estimate at their proper worth the epithets he applies and the motives he attributes to the object of his hate. *He* can, of course, think of no other reason why his victim "would not moan, would not curse," than that, if he did, "his lot might be worse." And again, when temptation failed to shake his steadfast patience, the tyrant is quite consistent with himself, as one of those who call evil good, and good evil, in speaking of him as still keeping "to his filth." The last stanza is magnificent. Has the power of prayer ever been set forth in nobler language ?

THE LOST LEADER.

I.

JUST for a handful of silver he left us,
 Just for a riband to stick in his coat—
 Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
 Lost all the others, she lets us devote ;
 They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
 So much was theirs who so little allowed :
 How all our copper had gone for his service !
 Rags—were they purple, his heart had been proud !
 We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
 Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
 Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
 Made him our pattern to live and to die !
 Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
 Burns, Shelley, were with us,—they watch from their
 graves !
 He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
 He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves !

II.

We shall march prospering,—not thro' his presence ;
 Songs may inspirit us,—not from his lyre ;
 Deeds will be done,—while he boasts his quiescence,
 Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire :
 Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
 One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
 One more devil's-triumph and sorrow for angels,
 One more wrong to man, one more insult to God !

Life's night begins : let him never come back to us !

There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
 Forced praise on our part—the glimmer of twilight,
 Never glad confident morning again !
 Best fight on well, for we taught him—strike gallantly,
 Menace our heart ere we master his own ;
 Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
 Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne !

"The Lost Leader" is supposed to be the poet Wordsworth, who, on accepting the laureateship, abandoned the party of distinguished literary men who had enthusiastically supported the principles of the French Revolution. It is necessary, of course, to enter into the lofty enthusiasm of that party, and for the moment to identify ourselves with it, in order to appreciate the wonderful power and pathos of this exquisite poem. (See Wordsworth's "French Revolution as it appeared to enthusiasts at its commencement.")

The contrasts are very powerful between the one (paltry) gift he gained, and all the others (love, loyalty, life, &c.) they were privileged to *devote* (far richer than mere possession) ; and again, between the niggardliness of his new patrons with their dole of silver, contrasted with the enthusiastic devotion of his own followers, who having nothing but "copper," would yet put it all at his service—having nothing but "rags," were yet so liberal with what they had, that had they been purple, he would have been proud indeed, seeing that "a riband to stick in his coat" had proved so great an attraction.

In the second stanza the fountains of the great deep of human feeling are broken up. "Life's night begins" suggests at once the strength of the previous attachment, and the hopelessness of the broken tie being ever knit again on earth. The best thing is to be counted enemies now, and fight against each other as gallantly as they would have fought together. At the same time there is absolute confidence in the ultimate triumph of the party of freedom—he may "menace our hearts," but we shall "master his"—and in the ultimate recovery of the lost leader himself, whom he hopes to find "pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne."

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS.

I.

WHERE the quiet coloured end of evening smiles,
 Miles and miles,
 On the solitary pastures where our sheep
 Half-asleep
 Tinkle homeward thro' the twilight, stray or stop
 As they crop—
 Was the site once of a city great and gay,
 (So they say)
 Of our country's very capital, its prince,
 Ages since,
 Held his court in, gathered councils, wielding far
 Peace or war.

II.

Now,—the country does not even boast a tree,
 As you see,
 To distinguish slopes of verdure, certain rills
 From the hills
 Intersect and give a name to, (else they run
 Into one)
 Where the domed and daring palace shot its spires
 Up like fires
 O'er the hundred-gated circuit of a wall
 Bounding all,
 Made of marble, men might march on nor be pressed
 Twelve abreast.

III.

And such plenty and perfection, see, of grass
 Never was !
 Such a carpet as, this summer-time, o'erspreads
 And embeds
 Every vestige of the city, guessed alone,
 Stock or stone—
 Where a multitude of men breathed joy and woe
 Long ago ;
 Lust of glory pricked their hearts up, dread of shame
 Struck them tame ;
 And that glory and that shame alike, the gold
 Bought and sold.

IV.

Now,—the single little turret that remains
 On the plains,
 By the caper overrooted, by the gourd
 Overscored,
 While the patching houseleek's head of blossom winks
 Through the chinks—
 Marks the basement whence a tower in ancient time
 Sprang sublime,
 And a burning ring, all round, the chariots traced
 As they raced,
 And the monarch and his minions and his dames
 Viewed the games.

V.

And I know—while thus the quiet-coloured eve
Smiles to leave
To their folding, all our many tinkling fleece
In such peace,
And the slopes and rills in undistinguished grey
Melt away—
That a girl with eager eyes and yellow hair
Waits me there
In the turret whence the charioteers caught soul
For the goal,
When the king looked, where she looks now, breathless,
dumb
Till I come.

VI.

But he looked upon the city, every side,
Far and wide,
All the mountains topped with temples, all the glades
Colonnades,
All the causeys, bridges, aqueducts,—and then,
All the men !
When I do come, she will speak not, she will stand
Either hand
On my shoulder, give her eyes the first embrace
Of my face,
Ere we rush, ere we extinguish sight and speech
Each on each.

VII.

In one year they sent a million fighters forth
 South and North,
 And they built their gods a brazen pillar high
 As the sky,
 Yet reserved a thousand chariots in full force—
 Gold, of course.
 Oh heart ! oh blood that freezes, blood that burns !
 Earth's returns
 For whole centuries of folly, noise and sin !
 Shut them in,
 With their triumphs and their glories and the rest !
 Love is best.

The supreme value of love is a constantly recurring thought in the poems of our author. We shall meet it in its higher ranges in selections to come. Here we are still in the sphere of the mere earthly affection, with only the suggestion, in contrast with the transitoriness of earthly glory, of its indestructibility.

No explanation seems needed, excepting perhaps to call attention to this, that the "little turret" in stanza 4 is not a bartizan, but a staircase turret, or it could not "mark the basement, whence a tower in ancient time sprang sublime."

Observe, in each stanza, the striking contrast between the former and the latter half, so balanced that the poem might be divided into fourteen single or six double stanzas.

There is not much of the descriptive in the poems of our author ; he is the poet, not of Nature, but of Human Nature ; but when he does touch landscape, as here, it is with the hand of a master.

MY STAR.

ALL that I know
 Of a certain star
 Is, it can thrów
 (Like the angled spar)
 Now a dart of red,
 Now a dart of blue ;
 Till my friends have said
 They would fain see, too,
 My star that dartles the red and the blue !
 Then it stops like a bird ; like a flower, hangs furled :
 They must solace themselves with the Saturn above it.
 What matter to me if their star is a world ?
 Mine has opened its soul to me ; therefore I love it.

The following sentence, from Walter Besant, in "All Sorts and Conditions of Men," well expresses the key-thought of this little gem of a poem : "So great is the beauty of human nature, even in its second rate or third rate productions, that love generally follows when one of the two, by confession or unconscious self-betrayal, stands revealed to the other."

Compare also the closing stanzas of "One Word More," especially stanza 18.

RUDEL TO THE LADY OF TRIPOLI.

I.

I KNOW a Mount, the gracious Sun perceives
 First, when he visits, last, too, when he leaves
 The world ; and, vainly favoured, it repays
 The day-long glory of his steadfast gaze
 By no change of its large calm front of snow.
 And, underneath the Mount, a Flower I know,
 He cannot have perceived, that changes ever
 At his approach ; and, in the lost endeavour
 To live his life, has parted, one by one,
 With all a flower's true graces, for the grace
 Of being but a foolish mimic sun,
 With ray-like florets round a disk-like face.
 Men nobly call by many a name the Mount
 As over many a land of theirs its large
 Calm front of snow like a triumphal targe
 Is reared, and still with old names, fresh names vie,
 Each to its proper praise and own account :
 Men call the Flower, the Sunflower, sportively.

II.

Oh, Angel of the East, one, one gold look
 Across the waters to this twilight nook,
 —The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook !

III.

Dear Pilgrim, art thou for the East indeed ?
 Go !—saying ever as thou dost proceed,
 That I, French Rudel, choose for my device
 A sunflower outspread like a sacrifice
 Before its idol. See ! These inexpert
 And hurried fingers could not fail to hurt
 The woven picture ; 't is a woman's skill
 Indeed ; but nothing baffled me, so, ill
 Or well, the work is finished. Say, men feed
 On songs I sing, and therefore bask the bees
 On my flower's breast as on a platform broad :
 But, as the flower's concern is not for these
 But solely for the sun, so men applaud
 In vain this Rudel, he not looking here
 But to the East—the East ! Go, say this, Pilgrim dear !

This poem was first published in "Bells and Pomegranates" under the head of "Queen Worship." How exquisite the plea of the unnoticed Flower, with no pretence to vie with the Mountain in its claim upon the Sun's attention, except this, that the great unchanging Mountain is "vainly favoured," while the Flower yields itself up in ceaseless and self-forgetting devotion to an imitation, however feeble and foolish, of the great Sun Life.

The second stanza is very rich. There is no mention in it of Sun or Mountain or Flower ; but as the Flower looks up to the Sun from its nook at the Mountain's base, so Rudel yearns for "one gold look" from his Sun, the "Angel of the East."

The meaning of the third stanza will be apparent when it is remembered that "French Rudel" was a troubadour of the 12th century—the days of the Crusades, and of the romance of chivalry. In those days the best way to communicate with the East would be through some pilgrim passing thither : and nothing would be more natural than such a reference to the "device" which he had patiently, and in spite of difficulty, worked so as to wear it as her "favour : " and once more, it is eminently natural to represent the troubadour, not as sending a written message, but as finding a sympathetic pilgrim to burden his memory with it—charging him to keep it fresh by repetition till it had been duly delivered.

NEVER THE TIME AND THE PLACE.

NEVER the time and the place
 And the loved one all together !
 This path—how soft to pace !
 This May—what magic weather !
 Where is the loved one's face ?
 In a dream that loved one's face meets mine,
 But the house is narrow, the place is bleak
 Where, outside, rain and wind combine
 With a furtive ear, if I strive to speak
 With a hostile eye at my flushing cheek,
 With a malice that marks each word, each sign !
 O enemy sly and serpentine
 Uncoil thee from the waking man !
 Do I hold the Past
 Thus firm and fast
 Yet doubt if the Future hold I can ?
 This path so soft to pace shall lead
 Through the magic of May to herself indeed !
 Or narrow if needs the house must be,
 Outside are the storms and strangers : we—
 Oh, close, safe, warm sleep I and she,
 —I and she !

This poem, published in "Jocoseria" in 1883, has no connection with "Rudel," published in "Bells and Pomegranates" in 1842; but it will naturally follow it as "another of the same," only with a happier ending; for though we learn from history that poor Rudel did one day reach Tripoli, it was only to die there,—let us hope still looking "to the East—the East!"

We get a glimpse here of the shifting moods of a lover's soul. First, there are the thoughts connected with the present experience—time and place all that could be desired, but the loved one, absent, (lines 1-5); next, thoughts arising from a dark dream or foreboding of the future when he and his loved one shall meet, but under circumstances cruelly unpropitious, the house narrow, the weather stormy, unsympathetic strangers by with furtive ears and hostile eyes, and even malice in their hearts (6-11); and last, the man within him rises to shake off the horrid serpent-like dream, and look forward with a healthy hope that time and place and all will be well; or, if the house must be narrow, (compare the Latin, "*res angusta domi*") it will be a Home, storms and strangers without, peace and rest within !

WANTING IS—WHAT?

WANTING is—what?
 Summer redundant,
 Blueness abundant,
 —Where is the spot?
 Beamy the world, yet a blank all the same,
 —Framework which waits for a picture to frame:
 What of the leafage, what of the flower?
 Roses embowering with nought they embower!
 Come then, complete incompleteness, O come,
 Pant through the blueness, perfect the Summer!
 Breathe but one breath
 Rose-beauty above,
 And all that was death
 Grows life, grows love,
 Grows love!

This is still the love of earth; but dealt with so grandly, that it is no wonder that some have understood it of the higher love, and to the question of the first line would give the answer, "God." Nor can it be said that the thought is alien—rather is it close akin; for is not the earthly love when pure and true, an image of the heavenly? It would be well, indeed, if love songs were oftener written in such a way as to suggest thoughts of the love of Heaven. The Bible is especially fearless in its use of the one to illustrate the other. With the higher thought in view, we are reminded of the closing lines of "The Rhyme of the Duchess May," by Mrs. Browning—

"And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our incompleteness—
 Round our restlessness, His rest."

Compare "By the Fireside," especially stanza 39.

EVELYN HOPE.

I.

BEAUTIFUL Evelyn Hope is dead !
 Sit and watch by her side an hour.
 That is her book-shelf, this her bed ;
 She plucked that piece of geranium-flower,
 Beginning to die too, in the glass ;
 Little has yet been changed, I think :
 The shutters are shut, no light may pass
 Save two long rays through the hinge's chink.

II.

Sixteen years old when she died !
 Perhaps she had scarcely heard my name ;
 It was not her time to love ; beside,
 Her life had many a hope and aim,
 Duties enough and little cares,
 And now was quiet, now astir,
 Till God's hand beckoned unawares,—
 And the sweet white brow is all of her.

III.

Is it too late then, Evelyn Hope ?
 What, your soul was pure and true,
 The good stars met in your horoscope,
 Made you of spirit, fire and dew—
 And, just because I was thrice as old,
 And our paths in the world diverged so wide.
 Each was nought to each, must I be told ?
 We were fellow mortals, nought beside ?

IV.

No, indeed ! for God above

Is great to grant, as mighty to make,
And creates the love to reward the love :

I claim you still, for my own love's sake !
Delayed it may be for more lives yet,

Through worlds I shall traverse, not a few :
Much is to learn, much to forget

Ere the time be come for taking you.

V.

But the time will come, at last it will,

When, Evelyn Hope, what meant (I shall say)
In the lower earth, in the years long still,

That body and soul so pure and gay ?
Why your hair was amber, I shall divine,
And your mouth of your own geranium's red—
And what you would do with me, in fine,
In the new life come in the old one's stead.

VI.

I have lived (I shall say) so much since then,

Given up myself so many times,
Gained me the gains of various men,
Ransacked the ages, spoiled the climes ;
Yet one thing, one, in my soul's full scope,
Either I missed or itself missed me :

And I want and find you, Evelyn Hope !
What is the issue ? let us see !

VII.

I loved you, Evelyn, all the while !
My heart seemed full as it could hold ;
There was place and to spare for the frank young smile
And the red young mouth, and the hair's young gold.
So hush,—I will give you this leaf to keep :
See, I shut it inside the sweet cold hand !
There, that is our secret : go to sleep !
You will wake, and remember, and understand.

This poem, so exquisite in finish, well-nigh perfect in form, is one of the few works of our author, almost universally known and admired. It is doubtful, however, if all its admirers look beneath the form and finish, or understand much more of it than they do of other poems, the crabbed style of which repels admiration as strongly as this attracts it. The tender pathos of the "geranium leaf" in the first and last stanzas, touches a chord in every heart ; but *the* thought of the piece is something far deeper and stronger, namely this, that true love is immortal, and that, therefore, however much it may fail of its object here, or even (if possible) in lives that follow this, it cannot fail for ever, it *must* find its object and be satisfied. It is a poem, not of the pathos of death, but of the promise of Life !

PROSPICE.

FEAR death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
 The mist in my face,
 When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
 I am nearing the place,
 The power of the night, the press of the storm,
 The post of the foe ;
 Where he stands the Arch Fear in a visible form,
 Yet the strong man must go :
 For the journey is done and the summit attained,
 And the barriers fall,
 Though a battle 's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
 The reward of it all.
 I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
 The best and the last !
 I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forebore,
 And bade me creep past.
 No ! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
 The heroes of old,
 Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
 Of pain, darkness and cold.
 For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
 The black minute 's at end,
 And the elements' rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
 Shall dwindle, shall blend,
 Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
 Then a light, then thy breast,
 O thou soul of my soul ! I shall clasp thee again,
 And with God be the rest !

GOOD, TO FORGIVE.

I.

GOOD, to forgive ;
 Best, to forget !
 Living, we fret ;
 Dying, we live.
 Fretless and free,
 Soul, clap thy pinion !
 Earth have dominion,
 Body, o'er thee !

II.

Wander at will,
 Day after day,—
 Wander away,
 Wandering still—
 Soul that canst soar !
 Body may slumber :
 Body shall cumber
 Soul-flight no more

III.

Waft of soul's wing !
 What lies above ?
 Sunshine and Love,
 Sky-blue and Spring !
 Body hides—where ?
 Ferns of all feather,
 Mosses and heather,
 Yours be the care !

This is the proem to "La Saisiaz," one of the most remarkable of the poet's works, in which the doctrine of immortality is argued with a profundity of thought that has perhaps never been surpassed, even in language freed from the fetters of verse. It also appears as No. III. of "Pisgah Sights" in the second English series of selections. Both of these connections suggest the key-note.

Observe the progress in the thought. In the first stanza the soul is "fretless and free"; in the second it moves onward and upward; in the third it has reached the region of "Sunshine and Love, Sky-blue and Spring !" Similarly as to the body—in the first stanza there is the apparent victory of the grave, "dust to dust"; in the next comes the thought that, after all, the body may only be slumbering; in the last, there is the beautiful suggestion that it is only hiding where it is tenderly cared for, till

"——with the morn those angel faces smile
 Which we have loved long since, and lost awhile.

TOUCH HIM NE'ER SO LIGHTLY.

' TOUCH him ne'er so lightly, into song he broke :
 Soil so quick-receptive,—not one feather-seed,
 Not one flower-dust fell but straight its fall awoke
 Vitalizing Virtue : song would song succeed
 Sudden as spontaneous—prove a poet-soul ! ”

Indeed ?

Rock 's the song-soil rather, surface hard and bare :
 Sun and dew their mildness, storm and frost their rage
 Vainly both expend,—few flowers awaken there :
 Quiet in its cleft broods—what the after age
 Knows and names a pine, a nation's heritage.

These lines appeared first as the Epilogue to the second series of Dramatic Idyls, published in 1880. In October of the same year, the poet wrote, in the Album of a young American lady, a sequel to them, which appeared (in fac-simile) in the *Century Magazine* of November, 1882. They are given here, with the kind consent of the publishers of that magazine :—

Thus I wrote in London, musing on my betters,
 Poets dead and gone : and lo, the critics cried
 “ Out on such a boast ! ”—as if I dreamed that fetters
 Binding Dante, bind up—me ! as if true pride
 Were not also humble !

So I smiled and sighed
 As I ope'd your book in Venice this bright morning,
 Sweet new friend of mine ! and felt tho' clay or sand—
 Whatsoe'er my soil be,—break—for praise or scorning—
 Out in grateful fancies—weeds, but weeds expand
 Almost into flowers, held by such a kindly hand !

POPULARITY.

I.

STAND still, true poet that you are !

I know you ; let me try and draw you.
Some night you 'll fail us ; when afar

You rise, remember one man saw you,
Knew you, and named a star !

II.

My star, God's glow-worm ! Why extend
That loving hand of His which leads you,
Yet locks you safe from end to end

Of this dark world, unless He needs you,
Just saves your light to spend ?

III.

His clenched hand shall uncloze at last,

I know, and let out all the beauty :

My poet holds the future fast,

Accepts the coming ages' duty,

Their present for this past.

IV.

That day, the earth's feast-master's brow

Shall clear, to God the chalice raising ;

"Others give best at first, but Thou

"Forever set'st our table praising,

"Keep'st the good wine till now ! "

V.

Meantime, I 'll draw you as you stand,
 With few or none to watch and wonder :
 I 'll say—a fisher, on the sand
 By Tyre the old, with ocean-plunder,
 A netful, brought to land.

VI.

Who has not heard how Tyrian shells
 Enclosed the blue, that dye of dyes
 Whereof one drop worked miracles,
 And coloured like Astarte's eyes
 Raw silk the merchant sells ?

VII.

And each bystander of them all
 Could criticize, and quote tradition
 How depths of blue sublimed some pall
 —To get which, pricked a king's ambition ;
 Worth sceptre, crown and ball.

VIII.

Yet there 's the dye, in that rough mesh,
 The sea has only just o'er-whispered !
 Live whelks, each lip's beard dripping fresh,
 As if they still the water's lisp heard
 Through foam the rock-weeds thresh.

IX.

Enough to furnish Solomon
 Such hangings for his cedar-house,
 That, when gold-robed he took the throne
 In that abyss of blue, the Spouse
 Might swear his presence shone

X.

Most like the centre-spike of gold
 Which burns deep in the blue-bell's womb
 What time, with ardours manifold,
 The bee goes singing to her groom,
 Drunken and overbold.

XI.

Mere conchs ! not fit for warp or woof !
 Till cunning come to pound and squeeze
 And clarify,—refine to proof
 The liquor filtered by degrees,
 While the world stands aloof.

XII.

And there 's the extract, flasked and fine,
 And priced and saleable at last !
 And Hobbs, Nobbs, Stokes and Nokes combine
 To paint the future from the past,
 Put blue into their line.

XIII.

Hobbs hints blue,—straight he turtle eats :
 Nobbs prints blue,—claret crowns his cup :
 Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats,—
 Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
 What porridge had John Keats ?

The true poet is he who discovers and discloses, for man's recognition and enjoyment, the hidden beauties which abound everywhere in the great kingdom of God. These beauties may be unrecognised at first, so that the poet is not known as a poet, except to such as the speaker here is supposed to be ("I know you"). He recognises in him a star. How is it, then, that his light is hidden? The hand of God, who looks down on him from far above ("God's glow-worm") as I look up to him from far below ("my star"), has closed around him to keep him and his light safe till the time shall come for discovery (Stanza 3) and for recognition (4). The drawing, or simile follows, of a Tyrian fisherman (5), who brings from the great sea the common-looking little whelk, from which, by a secret process, is obtained that wonderful dye which out-dazzles art, and almost equals Nature's most exquisite tints (6—10). While the process is going on, the world stands aloof (11); but as soon as the extract is "priced and saleable," the commonest people (12) can recognise it and make it pay (13); while the man who fished it up remains poor and unknown to fame.

The application is made with characteristic brevity, oddity, and antithetic power: Nokes, Stokes, & Co., gorging turtle; John Keats wanting porridge!

In connection with "Popularity" should be studied "The Two Poets of Croisic," far too long to be inserted here. An interesting comparison, also, may be made with a little poem of Tennyson's called "The Flower," beginning—

"Once in a golden hour
 I cast to earth a seed,
 Up there came a flower,
 The people said, a weed."

THE GUARDIAN-ANGEL.

A PICTURE AT FANO.

I.

DEAR and great Angel, wouldst thou only leave
 That child, when thou hast done with him, for me !
 Let me sit all the day here, that when eve
 Shall find performed thy special ministry,
 And time come for departure, thou, suspending
 Thy flight, may'st see another child for tending,
 Another still, to quiet and retrieve.

II.

Then I shall feel thee step one step, no more,
 From where thou standest now, to where I gaze.
 —And suddenly my head is covered o'er
 With those wings, white above the child who prays
 Now on that tomb—and I shall feel thee guarding
 Me, out of all the world ; for me, discarding
 Yon heaven thy home, that waits and opes its door.

III.

I would not look up thither past thy head
 Because the door opes, like that child, I know,
 For I should have thy gracious face instead,
 Thou bird of God ! And wilt thou bend me low
 Like him, and lay, like his, my hands together,
 And lift them up to pray, and gently tether
 Me, as thy lamb there, with thy garment's spread ?

IV.

If this was ever granted, I would rest

My head beneath thine, while thy healing hands
Close-covered both my eyes beside thy breast,

Pressing the brain which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing,
And all lay quiet, happy and suppressed.

V.

How soon all worldly wrong would be repaired !

I think how I should view the earth and skies
And sea, when once again my brow was bared

After thy healing, with such different eyes.
O world, as God has made it ! All is beauty :
And knowing this, is love, and love is duty.

What further may be sought for or declared ?

VI.

Guercino drew this angel I saw teach

(Alfred, dear friend !)—that little child to pray,
Holding the little hands up, each to each

Pressed gently,—with his own head turned away
Over the earth where so much lay before him
Of work to do, though heaven was opening o'er him,
And he was left at Fano by the beach.

VII.

We were at Fano, and three times we went
 To sit and see him in his chapel there,
 And drink his beauty to our soul's content
 —My angel with me too: and since I care
 For dear Guercino's fame (to which in power
 And glory comes this picture for a dower,
 Fraught with a pathos so magnificent),

VIII.

And since he did not work thus earnestly
 At all times, and has else endured some wrong—
 I took one thought his picture struck from me,
 And spread it out, translating it to song.
 My love is here. Where are you, dear old friend?
 How rolls the Wairoa at your world's far end?
 This is Ancona, yonder is the sea.

"The Guardian Angel" is given as a slight specimen of an important class, dealing with painting and painters. In the lovely poem, "One Word More," Browning disclaims all ability to paint; but no one could have a more exquisite appreciation of the art.

Has the tender pathos of these verses ever been surpassed? The calm of heaven is in this thought spread out—translated into song. Let it be read in connection with Spenser's exquisite lines, beginning "And is there care in heaven?"

"Alfred, dear friend," is Mr. Alfred Domett, who was then Prime Minister of New Zealand, at which far end of the world the Wairoa rolls to the sea.

DEAF AND DUMB.

A GROUP BY WOOLNER.

ONLY the prism's obstruction shows aright
 The secret of a sunbeam, breaks its light
 Into the jewelled bow from blankest white ;
 So may a glory from defect arise :
 Only by Deafness may the vexed love wreak
 Its insuppressive sense on brow and cheek,
 Only by Dumbness adequately speak
 As favoured mouth could never, through the eyes.

This is a "gem of purest ray." In order to understand it fully, it is necessary to know that the "group by Woolner" is of two deaf and dumb children—the one as if speaking, the other in the attitude of listening. The speech denied passage through the lips, breaks out in rarer beauty from the eyes; and for the hearing denied entrance by the ears, there is, instead, a subtle responsiveness of brow and cheek to the spirit utterance from the soul of the other; so that love, though "vexed," is not suppressed.

The exquisite beauty of the illustration of "the prism's obstruction," and the tender pathos of the thought, will be manifest to every reader.

ABT VOGLER.

(AFTER HE HAS BEEN EXTEMPORIZING UPON THE MUSICAL
INSTRUMENT OF HIS INVENTION.)

I.

WOULD that the structure brave, the manifold music I build,
Bidding my organ obey, calling its keys to their work,
Claiming each slave of the sound, at a touch, as when
Solomon willed

Armies of angels that soar, legions of demons that lurk,
Man, brute, reptile, fly,—alien of end and of aim,
Adverse, each from the other heaven-high, hell-deep
removed,—

Should rush into sight at once as he named the ineffable
Name,

And pile him a palace straight, to pleasure the princess he
loved !

II.

Would it might tarry like his, the beautiful building of mine,
This which my keys in a crowd pressed and importuned to
raise !

Ah, one and all, how they helped, would dispart now and now
combine,

Zealous to hasten the work, heighten their master his
praise !

And one would bury his brow with a blind plunge down to hell,
Burrow awhile and build, broad on the roots of things,
Then up again swim into sight, having based me my palace well,
Founded it, fearless of flame, flat on the nether springs.

III.

And another would mount and march, like the excellent
minion he was,

Ay, another and yet another, one crowd but with many a
crest,

Raising my rampired walls of gold as transparent as glass,

Eager to do and die, yield each his place to the rest :

For higher still and higher (as a runner tips with fire,

When a great illumination surprises a festal night—

Outlining round and round Rome's dome from space to
spire)

Up, the pinnacled glory reached, and the pride of my soul
was in sight

IV.

In sight? Not half! for it seemed, it was certain, to match
man's birth,

Nature in turn conceived, obeying an impulse as I ;

And the emulous heaven yearned down, made effort to reach
the earth,

As the earth had done her best, in my passion, to scale
the sky :

Novel splendours burst forth, grew familiar and dwelt with
mine,

Not a point nor peak but found, but fixed its wandering
star ;

Meteor-moons, balls of blaze : and they did not pale nor pine,

For earth had attained to heaven, there was no more near
nor far.

V.

Nay more ; for there wanted not who walked in the glare and
glow,

Presences plain in the place ; or, fresh from the Protoplast,
Furnished for ages to come, when a kindlier wind should
blow,

Lured now to begin and live, in a house to their liking at last ;
Or else the wonderful Dead who have passed through the
body and gone,

But were back once more to breathe in an old world worth
their new :

What never had been, was now ; what was, as it shall be
anon ;

And what is,—shall I say, matched both ? for I was made
perfect too.

VI.

All through my keys that gave their sounds to a wish of my
soul,

All through my soul that praised as its wish flowed visibly
forth,

All through music and me ! For think, had I painted the
whole,

Why, there it had stood, to see, nor the process so wonder-
worth.

Had I written the same, made verse—still, effect proceeds
from cause,

Ye know why the forms are fair, ye hear how the tale is told ;
It is all triumphant art, but art in obedience to laws

Painter and poet are proud, in the artist-list enrolled :—

VII.

But here is the finger of God, a flash of the will that can,
 Existent behind all laws : that made them, and, lo, they
 are !

And I know not if, save in this, such gift be allowed to
 man,

That out of three sounds he frame, not a fourth sound, but
 a star.

Consider it well : each tone of our scale in itself is nought ;
 It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is
 said :

Give it to me to use ! I mix it with two in my thought,
 And, there ! Ye have heard and seen : consider and bow
 the head !

VIII.

Well, it is gone at last, the palace of music I reared ;
 Gone ! and the good tears start, the praises that come too
 slow ;

For one is assured at first, one scarce can say that he
 feared,

That he even gave it a thought, the gone thing was
 to go.

Never to be again ! But many more of the kind

As good, nay, better perchance : is this your comfort
 to me ?

To me, who must be saved because I cling with my mind

To the same, same self, same love, same God : ay, what
 was, shall be.

IX.

Therefore to whom turn I but to Thee, the ineffable
Name?

Builder and maker, thou, of houses not made with
hands !

What, have fear of change from thee who art ever the
same?

Doubt that thy power can fill the heart that thy power
expands?

There shall never be one lost good ! What was, shall live as
before ;

The evil is null, is nought, is silence implying sound ;
What was good, shall be good, with, for evil, so much good
more ;

On the earth the broken arcs ; in the heaven, a perfect
round.

X.

All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good, shall
exist ;

Not its semblance, but itself ; no beauty, nor good, nor
power

Whose voice has gone forth, but each survives for the
melodist,

When eternity affirms the conception of an hour.

The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too
hard,

The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard ;

Enough that he heard it once : we shall hear it by-and-by.

XI.

And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
 For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or
 agonized?
 Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might
 issue thence?
 Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be
 prized?
 Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
 Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and
 woe:
 But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear;
 The rest may reason and welcome; 't is we musicians
 know.

XII.

Well, it is earth with me; silence resumes her reign:
 I will be patient and proud, and soberly acquiesce.
 Give me the keys. I feel for the common chord again,
 Sliding by semitones, till I sink to the minor,—yes,
 And I blunt it into a ninth, and I stand on alien ground,
 Surveying awhile the heights I rolled from into the deep
 Which, hark, I have dared and done, for my resting-place is
 found,
 The C major of this life: so, now I will try to sleep.

Having given specimen poems dealing with the arts of poetry, painting, and sculpture, we add one on the subject of music, which, though difficult to understand fully, has beauties which are apparent even to those who do not enter into its deepest thought. Vogler is not known as a composer of the first rank, having left no works behind him which entitle him to a place among the great masters; but, for this very reason, he is better suited for

the poet's purpose, which is to deal with music, not as represented by printed notes, but as existing for the moment in all its perfection, and at once melting away into silence and apparent nothingness. It is as extemporizer, not as author, he is chosen, and as Abbé (*Ger.* Abt) he appropriately thinks of those deep spiritual truths on which the loftier hopes of the latter part of the poem are founded.

The musician "has been extemporizing,"—pouring out his whole soul through the keys of his organ, and from that state of ecstasy he suddenly awakes and cries out, "Would that the structure brave, the manifold music I build . . . might tarry!" It has been no mere "volume," but a "palace" of sound. As Solomon (according to the well-known legend) summoned all spirits from above and from below, and all creatures of the earth, to build him a palace at once, so by a touch, "calling the keys to their work," he has summoned demons of the bass, angels of the treble, earth creatures of the middle tones, who, by eager and tumultuous and yet harmoniously united efforts, have caused "the pinnacled glory" to "rush into sight" (stanzas 1—3).

Into sight? There was far more in it than could be seen. As the soul of the musician ascended from earth, heaven descended on him; its stars crowned his work; its moons, its suns were close beside him—"there was no more near nor far" (4). And the boundaries of time, as well as the limits of space, were gone. The *absolute*, the *perfect* was reached; and to this palace of perfection had flocked "presences plain in the place," from the far Future and from the mystic Past. "There was no more sea"—no more distance or separation—all one, together, perfect (5). Reached how? Through music—the only one of the arts that leads into the region of the absolute and perfect, its effects not springing from causes the operation of which can be traced, and the law of their production defined, but responding directly to the will, even as creation responded to the *fiat* of God. Out of such simple elements can that be evoked, which should lead those who "consider" these things to "bow the head" (6, 7).

But was it only for a moment? Is it gone? Forever? (8).

I turn to God, and know it cannot be. Then follows that glorious passage, one of the finest in any language, every word of which should be studied, beginning—"There shall never be one lost good!" on to the end of stanza 11, which is the true climax of the poem.

The last stanza may be compared to the closing one of "Saul." It is the return from the empyrean to the plain of common life. Let some musical friend show how at the cadence of a very grand piece he would feel his way

down the chromatic scale, and then pause on that poignant discord, known as "the minor ninth," effecting, as it were, a separation ("alien ground") from the heights just descended, and giving thus the opportunity of looking up once more before a resting-place is found in "the common chord,"—"the C major of this life."

This is a poem which should be read over and over till the music of it has fairly entered the soul.

It has become common now to speak slightly of those representations of heaven which make large use of music to give them body in our thought, as if the idea intended to be conveyed were that the joy of heaven was to consist in an endless idle singing, a concert without a finale; but this easy criticism is surely too disregarding of the distinctive feature of music so strikingly set forth in this poem—viz., that it is the only one of the arts which while strongly appealing to sense, yet in its essence belongs to the realm of the unseen, so that it is in fact the only symbol within the range of man's experience which can even suggest the absolute, the perfect, the pure heavenly.

The following passage, from the "Memorials of Frances Ridley Havergal," (p. 151) is so strikingly illustrative of "Abt Vogler," that we cannot forbear quoting it:—

"In the train I had one of those curious musical visions which only very rarely visit me. I hear strange and very beautiful chords, generally full, slow and grand, succeeding each other in most interesting sequences. I do not invent them, I could not; they pass before my mind, and I only listen. Now and then my will seems aroused when I see ahead how some fine resolution might follow, and I seem to *will* that certain chords should come, and then they do come; but then my will seems suspended again, and they go on quite independently. It is so interesting, the chords seem to *fold over each other*, and die away down into music of infinite softness, and then they *unfold* and open out, as if great curtains were being withdrawn one after another, widening the view, till, with a gathering power and intensity and fulness, it seems as if the very skies were being opened out before one, and a sort of great blaze and glory of music, such as my outward ears never heard, gradually swells out in perfectly sublime splendour. This time there was an added feature; I seemed to hear depths and heights of sound beyond the scale which human ears can receive, keen, far-up octaves, like vividly twinkling *starlight* of music, and mighty slow vibrations of gigantic strings going down into grand thunders of depths, octaves below anything otherwise appreciable as musical notes. Then, all at once, it seemed as if my soul had got a new sense, and I could *see* this inner music as well as hear it; and then it was like gazing down into marvellous *abysses of sound*, and up into dazzling regions of what, to the eye, would have been light and colour, but to this new sense was *sound*.

ONE WORD MORE.

TO E. B. B.

London, September, 1855.

I.

THERE they are, my fifty men and women
 Naming me the fifty poems finished !
 Take them, love, the book and me together :
 Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

II.

Rafael made a century of sonnets,
 Made and wrote them in a certain volume
 Dinted with the silver-pointed pencil
 Else he only used to draw Madonnas :
 These, the world might view—but one, the volume.
 Who that one, you ask ? Your heart instructs you.
 Did she live and love it all her life-time ?
 Did she drop, his lady of the sonnets,
 Die and let it drop beside her pillow
 Where it lay in place of Rafael's glory,
 Rafael's cheek so duteous and so loving—
 Cheek, the world was wont to hail a painter's,
 Rafael's cheek, her love had turned a poet's ?

III.

You and I would rather read that volume,
 (Taken to his beating bosom by it)
 Lean and list the bosom-beats of Rafael,
 Would we not ? than wonder at Madonnas—

Her, San Sisto names, and Her, Foligno,
 Her, that visits Florence in a vision,
 Her, that 's left with lilies in the Louvre—
 Seen by us and all the world in circle.

IV.

You and I will never read that volume.
 Guido Reni, like his own eye's apple,
 Guarded long the treasure-book and loved it.
 Guido Reni dying, all Bologna
 Cried, and the world cried too "Ours, the treasure!"
 Suddenly, as rare things will, it vanished.

V.

Dante once prepared to paint an angel:
 Whom to please? You whisper "Beatrice."
 While he mused and traced it and retraced it,
 (Peradventure with a pen corroded
 Still by drops of that hot ink he dipped for,
 When, his left hand i' the hair o' the wicked,
 Back he held the brow and pricked its stigma,
 Bit into the live man's flesh for parchment,
 Loosed him, laughed to see the writing rankle,
 Let the wretch go festering through Florence)—
 Dante, who loved well because he hated,
 Hated wickedness that hinders loving,
 Dante standing, studying his angel,—
 In there broke the folk of his Inferno.
 Says he—"Certain people of importance"
 (Such he gave his daily dreadful line to)
 "Entered and would seize, forsooth, the poet."
 Says the poet—"Then I stopped my painting."

VI.

You and I would rather see that angel,
 Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
 Would we not?—than read a fresh *Inferno*.

VII.

You and I will never see that picture.
 While he mused on love and Beatrice,
 While he softened o'er his outlined angel,
 In they broke, those "people of importance :"
 We and Bice bear the loss for ever.

VIII.

What of Rafael's sonnets, Dante's picture?
 This : no artist lives and loves, that longs not
 Once, and only once, and for one only,
 (Ah, the prize !) to find his love a language
 Fit and fair and simple and sufficient—
 Using nature that 's an art to others,
 Not, this one time, art that 's turned his nature.
 Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
 None but would forego his proper dowry,—
 Does he paint? he fain would write a poem,—
 Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
 Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
 Once, and only once, and for one only.
 So to be the man and leave the artist,
 Gain the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

IX.

Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement.
 He who smites the rock and spreads the water,
 Bidding drink and live a crowd beneath him,
 Even he, the minute-makes immortal,
 Proves, perchance, but mortal in the minute.
 Desecrates, belike, the deed in doing.
 While he smites, how can he but remember,
 So he smote before, in such a peril,
 When they stood and mocked—" Shall smiting help us? "
 When they drank and sneered—" A stroke is easy! "
 When they wiped their mouths and went their journey,
 Throwing him for thanks—" But drought was pleasant."
 Thus old memories mar the actual triumph;
 Thus the doing savours of disrelish;
 Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat;
 O'er-importuned brows becloud the mandate,
 Carelessness or consciousness—the gesture.
 For he bears an ancient wrong about him,
 Sees and knows again those phalanxed faces,
 Hears, yet one time more, the 'customed prelude—
 " How should'st thou, of all men, smite, and save us? "
 Guesses what is like to prove the sequel—
 " Egypt's flesh-pots—nay, the drought was better."

X.

Oh, the crowd must have emphatic warrant!
 Theirs, the Sinai-forehead's cloven brilliance,
 Right-arm's rod-sweep, tongue's imperial fiat.
 Never dares the man put off the prophet.

XI.

Did he love one face from out the thousands,
 (Were she Jethro's daughter, white and wifely,
 Were she but the Æthiopian bond-slave,)
 He would envy yon dumb patient camel,
 Keeping a reserve of scanty water
 Meant to save his own life in the desert ;
 Ready in the desert to deliver
 (Kneeling down to let his breast be opened)
 Hoard and life together for his mistress.

XII.

I shall never, in the years remaining,
 Paint you pictures, no, nor carve you statues,
 Make you music that should all-express me ;
 So it seems : I stand on my attainment.
 This of verse alone, one life allows me ;
 Verse and nothing else have I to give you.
 Other heights in other lives, God willing :
 All the gifts from all the heights, your own, love !

XIII.

Yet a semblance of resource avails us—
 Shade so finely touched, love's sense must seize it.
 Take these lines, look lovingly and nearly,
 Lines I write the first time and the last time.
 He who works in fresco, steals a hair-brush;
 Curbs the liberal hand, subservient proudly,

Cramps his spirit, crowds its all in little,
 Makes a strange art of an art familiar,
 Fills his lady's missal-marge with flowerets.
 He who blows through bronze, may breathe through silver,
 Fitly serenade a slumbrous princess.
 He who writes, may write for once as I do.

XIV.

Love, you saw me gather men and women,
 Live or dead or fashioned by my fancy,
 Enter each and all, and use their service,
 Speak from every mouth,—the speech, a poem.
 Hardly shall I tell my joys and sorrows,
 Hopes and fears, belief and disbelieving :
 I am mine and yours—the rest be all men's,
 Karshish, Cleon, Norbert and the fifty.
 Let me speak this once in my true person,
 Not as Lippo, Roland or Andrea,
 Though the fruit of speech be just this sentence—
 Pray you, look on these my men and women,
 Take and keep my fifty poems finished ;
 Where my heart lies, let my brain lie also !
 Poor the speech ; be how I speak, for all things.

XV.

Not but that you know me ! Lo, the moon's self !
 Here in London, yonder late in Florence,
 Still we find her face, the thrice-transfigured.
 Curving on a sky imbrued with colour,
 Drifted over Fiesole by twilight,
 Came she, our new crescent of a hair's-breadth.

Full she flared it, lamping Samminiato,
 Rounder 'twixt the cypresses and rounder,
 Perfect till the nightingales applauded.
 Now, a piece of her old self, impoverished.
 Hard to greet, she traverses the houseroofs,
 Hurries with unhandsome thrift of silver,
 Goes dispiritedly, glad to finish.

XVI.

What, there's nothing in the moon note-worthy?
 Nay : for if that moon could love a mortal,
 Use, to charm him (so to fit a fancy)
 All her magic ('t is the old sweet mythos)
 She would turn a new side to her mortal,
 Side unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman—
 Blank to Zoroaster on his terrace,
 Blind to Galileo on his turret,
 Dumb to Homer, dumb to Keats—him, even!
 Think, the wonder of the moon-struck mortal—
 When she turns round, comes again in heaven,
 Opens out anew for worse or better!
 Proves she like some portent of an iceberg
 Swimming full upon the ship it founders,
 Hungry with huge teeth of splintered crystals?
 Proves she as the paved work of a sapphire
 Seen by Moses when he climbed the mountain?
 Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu
 Climbed and saw the very God, the Highest,
 Stand upon the paved work of a sapphire.
 Like the bodied heaven in his clearness
 Shone the stone, the sapphire of that paved work,
 When they ate and drank and saw God also!

XVII.

What were seen? None knows, none ever shall know.
 Only this is sure—the sight were other,
 Not the moon's same side, born late in Florence,
 Dying now impoverished here in London.
 God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
 Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
 One to show a woman when he loves her!

XVIII.

This I say of me, but think of you, Love!
 This to you—yourself my moon of poets!
 Ah, but that's the world's side, there's the wonder,
 Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you!
 There, in turn I stand with them and praise you—
 Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
 But the best is when I glide from out them,
 Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
 Come out on the other side, the novel
 Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of,
 Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

XIX.

Oh, their Rafael of the dear Madonnas,
 Oh, their Dante of the dread Inferno,
 Wrote one song—and in my brain I sing it,
 Drew one angel—borne, see, on my bosom!

"Men and Women," a collection of fifty poems, first published in 1855, is probably the best known of our author's numerous volumes. Some of the very finest of his work is in it. To this collection "One Word More"

is an appendix, in the form of a dedication of the fifty poems to his wife, Elizabeth Barrett Browning. As we learn from stanza 13, this work differs from all others in having been dashed off, the first time of writing being also the last time; and yet (such is the inspiration of love) it stands with the very highest of his works. It needs careful reading, but presents no such difficulties as "Abt Vogler."

Rafael, painter for the world, becomes for once a poet for his dearest. If only these wonderful sonnets could be found, how we should prize them; but the volume is hopelessly lost (stanzas 2—4).

Dante, poet for the world, prepares for once to paint an angel for *his* dearest. But, alas! he is hindered by the breaking in of some "people of importance" of the city, the sort of people who served as character models for "the folk of his Inferno" (5—7).

There would evidently be less of art and more of nature in such an outpouring of soul; and, therefore, the true artist would long to do it "once, and only once, and for one only." "The man's joy" would be found in the mere utterance of his soul to his dearest, without any thought of art, which, to the true artist, lifts so high an ideal that his shortcoming is always a "sorrow" (8).

So is it with the prophet, the exercise of whose high calling can never be dissociated from its burdens and cares (9). If he dared, which he may not (10), how gladly for the one that he loved would he "put off the prophet" and provide water, not by the forth putting of power, but simply as the man, through the self-denial of love (11).

Browning himself has only the one art, so cannot leave his poetry to paint, or carve, or "make music" (12); but as the nearest equivalent possible to him will write "once, and only once, and for one only," a purely extemporaneous production (13), which shall not, like his other works, be dramatic in principle, but spoken in his own "true person" (14).

Then follows the wonderful moon illustration, so marvellously wrought out, based upon the familiar astronomical fact that, through all her phases and movements she always presents exactly the same face to the earth (15), the other remaining entirely concealed ("unseen of herdsman, huntsman, steersman," &c.), and therefore available as a new revelation (who knows of what grandeur?) for the loved and specially-favoured mortal (16).

The application of the illustration in stanzas 17 and 18 is exquisitely beautiful, as is the gem-like quatrain with which the poem closes.

SAUL.

[The three selections which fill up the rest of this little volume are given as specimens of the distinctively Christian poems of our author. The first gives us Christ in the Old Testament ; the second, Christ in the New ; the third, Christianity in its essential truth and practical application. As only a portion of "Saul" can be given, a few words will be necessary to prepare the reader unacquainted with the whole for taking up the thread at the 14th stanza, from which, in the selection, the poem is continued uninterruptedly to the end]

Young David is telling over to himself (see "my voice to my heart," in stanza 14) the story of his mission to Saul, when, as an inspired poet-musician, he charmed the evil spirit away from him. Stanza 16, consisting of one line, is the hinge of the entire poem ; for David has just reached the point where, after several unsuccessful, or very partially successful, attempts—first, by playing one and another and another tune, which might awaken some chord in the apathetic spirit of the king, and then by singing, accompanied by the harp, first, of the joy of life, then of the splendid results of a royal life like Saul's in the great future of the world—he at last, the truth coming upon him, strikes the high key where full relief is found. As he approaches this crisis in the tale, he cannot go on without an earnest invocation for help to tell what he had been so wonderfully led to sing :—

XIV.

AND behold while I sang . . but O 'Thou who didst grant
me, that day,

And, before it, not seldom hast granted thy help to essay,
Carry on and complete an adventure,—my shield and my
sword

In that act where my soul was thy servant, thy word was my
word,—

Still help me, who then at the summit of human endeavour
And scaling the highest, man's thought could, gazed hopeless
as ever

Be the life and the bearing that front you, the same, God did
choose,

To receive what a man may waste, desecrate, never quite
lose.

So sank he along by the tent-prop, still, stayed by the pile
Of his armour and war-cloak and garments, he leaned there
awhile,

And sat out my singing,—one arm round the tent-prop, to
raise

His bent head, and the other hung slack—till I touched on
the praise

I foresaw from all men in all time, to the man patient there;
And thus ended, the harp falling forward. Then first I was
'ware

That he sat, as I say, with my head just above his vast knees
Which were thrust out on each side around me, like oak
roots which please

To encircle a lamb when it slumbers. I looked up to know
If the best I could do had brought solace : he spoke not, but
slow

Lifted up the hand slack at his side, till he laid it with care
Soft and grave, but in mild settled will, on my brow : thro'
my hair

The large fingers were pushed, and he bent back my head,
with kind power—

All my face back, intent to peruse it, as men do a flower.
Thus held he me there with his great eyes that scrutinized
mine—

And oh, all my heart how it loved him ! but where was the
sign ?

I yearned—" Could I help thee, my father, inventing a bliss,

“I would add, to that life of the past, both the future and
this ; •

“I would give thee new life altogether, as good, ages hence,

“As this moment,—had love but the warrant, love’s heart
to dispense !”

XVI.

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more—no song
more ! outbroke—

XVII.

“I have gone the whole round of creation : I saw and I
spoke ;

“I, a work of God’s hand for that purpose, received in my
brain

“And pronounced on the rest of his handwork—returned
him again

“His creation’s approval or censure : I spoke as I saw,

“Reported, as man may of God’s work—all ’s love, yet all ’s
law.

“Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty
tasked

“To perceive him has gained an abyss, where a dew-drop
was asked.

“Have I knowledge ? confounded it shrivels at Wisdom laid
bare.

“Have I forethought ? how purblind, how blank, to the
Infinite Care !

“Do I task any faculty highest, to image success ?

“I but open my eyes,—and perfection, no more and no less,

"In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God

"In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the
clod.

"And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew

"(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it
too)

"The submission of man's nothing-perfect to God's all-
complete,

"As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet.

"Yet with all this abounding experience, this deity known,

"I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my
own.

"There 's a faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hood-wink,

"I am fain to keep still in abeyance, (I laugh as I think)

"Lest, insisting to claim and parade in it, wot ye, I worst

"E'en the Giver in one gift.—Behold, I could love if I durst!

"But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake

"God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain for
love's sake.

—"What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors
great and small,

"Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth
appal?

"In the least things have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of
all?

"Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,

"That I doubt his own love can compete with it? Here, the
parts shift?

"Here, the creature surpass the Creator,—the end what
began?

"Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,

"And dare doubt he alone shall not help him, who yet alone
can ?

"Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much
less power,

"To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous
dower

"Of the life he was gifted and filled with ? to make such a
soul,

"Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the
whole ?

"And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest),

"These good things being given, to go on, and give one more,
the best ?

"Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the
height

"This perfection,—succeed, with life's dayspring, death's
minute of night :

"Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,

"Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now,—and bid him
awake

"From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself
set

"Clear and safe in new light and new life,—a new harmony
yet

"To be run and continued, and ended—who knows?—or
endure !

"The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make
sure ;

"By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,

"And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggles
in this.

XVIII.

"I believe it! 'T is thou, God, that givest, 't is I who
receive :

"In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.

"All 's one gift : thou canst grant it, moreover, as prompt to
my prayer,

"As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the
air.

"From thy will, stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread
Sabaoth :

"*I* will?—the mere atoms despise me ! Why am I not loth

"To look that, even that in the face too? Why is it I
dare

"Think but lightly of such impuissance? What stops my
despair?

"This ;—'t is not what man Does which exalts him, but what
man Would do !

"See the King—I would help him, but cannot, the wishes
fall through.

"Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to
enrich,

"To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would—knowing
which,

"I know that my service is perfect. Oh, speak through me
now !

"Would I suffer for him that I love? So wouldst thou—so
wilt thou !

"So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost
crown—

"And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down

"One spot for the creature to stand in ! It is by no breath,

“Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins issue with
death !

“As thy love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved

“Thy power, that exists with and for it, of being beloved !

“He who did most shall bear most ; the strongest shall stand
the most weak.

“’T is the weakness in strength that I cry for ! my flesh that
I seek

“In the Godhead ! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be

“A Face like my face that receives thee ; a Man like to me,

“Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever : a Hand like this
hand

“Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee ! See the
Christ stand !”

XIX.

I know not too well how I found my way home in the night.
There were witnesses, cohorts about me, to left and to right,
Angels, powers, the unuttered, unseen, the alive, the aware :
I repressed, I got through them as hardly, as strugglingly
there,

As a runner beset by the populace famished for news—

Life or death. The whole earth was awakened, hell loosed
with her crews ;

And the stars of night beat with emotion, and tingled and
shot

Out in fire the strong pain of pent knowledge : but I fainted
not,

For the Hand still impelled me at once and supported,
suppressed

him," connecting them carefully with the next stanza (16), "*Then* the truth came upon me." It is only to the earnestly-loving heart that such a revelation of God could be given. "God is Love, and he that loveth not knoweth not God." Observe, also, in this short stanza the effect of the intense earnestness of his soul, leading him to lay aside his harp and cease his singing, and simply break out in impassioned speech.

Stanza 17.—Shall God be infinitely above his creature man, in all faculties except one, and that "the greatest of all," viz., Love? (Note, in passing, the exquisite beauty of the lines: "With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too," and "As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet." The passage immediately following this line is of course ironical at his own expense, which is indicated by the parenthetical "I laugh as I think"; as if to say "how utterly foolish the thought that such a wide province, such a grand gift, as Love, should be mine quite apart from God, the great Ruler and Giver of all!")

Stanza 18.—Impossible! God is the giver: all that I have—Love, as well as everything else—is from him; I can wish, but cannot will the thing I would; but God can, therefore God will; his love cannot be frustrated as mine is; it must even for such as "Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now," find Salvation; being infinite it must have its will, and find a way, however hard it be (see the striking line "it is by no breath," &c.); and *there it is!* See THE CHRIST stand!

Remember carefully the position as explained in the 15th stanza as you read the magnificent climax, beginning—

"O Saul, it shall be

A Face like my face that receives thee;"

observe also the effect of the spondee with which stanza 18 closes, instead of the usual anapæst; it gives wonderful dignity and strength to the thought. The same effect is produced several times in the early part of the poem by the same means, but nowhere with such power as in this, the grand climax.

What a contrast here to the petty mechanical notions of inspiration which have so often degraded the loftiest subject of human thought; and how marvellously is the presence and the power of the Unseen on such a soul as David's imaged forth in the lines of the closing stanza, in words which seem almost to utter the unutterable.

AN EPISTLE

CONTAINING THE
STRANGE MEDICAL EXPERIENCE OF KARSHISH,
THE ARAB PHYSICIAN.

KARSHISH, the picker-up of learning's crumbs,
The not-incurious in God's handiwork
(This man's-flesh he hath admirably made,
Blown like a bubble, kneaded like a paste,
To coop up and keep down on earth a space
That puff of vapour from his mouth, man's soul)
—To Abib, all-sagacious in our art,
Breeder in me of what poor skill I boast,
Like me inquisitive how pricks and cracks
Befall the flesh through too much stress and strain,
Whereby the wily vapour fain would slip
Back and rejoin its source before the term,—
And aptest in contrivance (under God)
To baffle it by deftly stopping such :—
The vagrant Scholar to his Sage at home
Sends greeting (health and knowledge, fame with peace)
Three samples of true snake-stone—rarer still,
One of the other sort, the melon-shaped,
(But fitter, pounded fine, for charms than drugs)
And writeth now the twenty-second time.

My journeyings were brought to Jericho :
Thus I resume. Who studious in our art
Shall count a little labour unrepaid ?
I have shed sweat enough, left flesh and bone

On many a flinty furlong of this land.
 Also, the country-side is all on fire
 With rumours of a marching hitherward :
 Some say Vespasian cometh, some, his son.
 A black lynx snarled and pricked a tufted ear :
 Lust of my blood inflamed his yellow balls :
 I cried and threw my staff and he was gone.
 Twice have the robbers stripped and beaten me,
 And once a town declared me for a spy ;
 But at the end, I reach Jerusalem,
 Since this poor covert where I pass the night,
 This Bethany, lies scarce the distance thence
 A man with plague-sores at the third degree
 Runs till he drops down dead. Thou laughest here !
 'Sooth, it elates me, thus reposed and safe,
 To void the stuffing of my travel-scrip
 And share with thee whatever Jewry yields.
 A viscid choler is observable
 In tertians, I was nearly bold to say ;
 And falling-sickness hath a happier cure
 Than our school wots of : there 's a spider here
 Weaves no web, watches on the ledge of tombs,
 Sprinkled with mottles on an ash-grey back ;
 Take five and drop them . . . but who knows his mind,
 The Syrian run-a-gate I trust this to ?
 His service payeth me a sublimate
 Blown up his nose to help the ailing eye.
 Best wait : I reach Jerusalem at morn,
 There set in order my experiences,
 Gather what most deserves, and give thee all—
 Or I might add, Judæa's gum-tragacanth

Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,
 Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,
 In fine exceeds our produce. Scalp-disease
 Confounds me, crossing so with leprosy :
 Thou hadst admired one sort I gained at Zoar—
 But zeal outruns discretion. Here I end.

Yet stay ! my Syrian blinketh gratefully,
 Protesteth his devotion is my price—
 Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal ?
 I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush,
 What set me off a-writing first of all.
 An itch I had, a sting to write, a tang !
 For, be it this town's barrenness—or else
 The Man had something in the look of him—
 His case has struck me far more than 't is worth.
 So, pardon if—(lest presently I lose,
 In the great press of novelty at hand,
 The care and pains this somehow stole from me)
 I bid thee take the thing while fresh in mind,
 Almost in sight—for, wilt thou have the truth ?
 The very man is gone from me but now,
 Whose ailment is the subject of discourse.
 Thus then, and let thy better wit help all !

'T is but a case of mania : subinduced
 By epilepsy, at the turning-point
 Of trance prolonged unduly some three days
 When, by the exhibition of some drug
 Or spell, exorcisation, stroke of art
 Unknown to me and which 't were well to know,

The evil thing, out-breaking, all at once,
 Left the man whole and sound of body indeed,—
 But, flinging (so to speak) life's gates too wide,
 Making a clear house of it too suddenly,
 The first conceit that entered might inscribe
 Whatever it was minded on the wall
 So plainly at that vantage, as it were,
 (First come, first served) that nothing subsequent
 Attaineth to erase those fancy-scrawls
 The just-returned and new-established soul
 Hath gotten now so thoroughly by heart
 That henceforth she will read or these or none.
 And first—the man's own firm conviction rests
 • That he was dead (in fact they buried him)
 —That he was dead and then restored to life
 By a Nazarene physician of his tribe :
 —'Sayeth, the same bade " Rise," and he did rise.
 " Such cases are diurnal," thou wilt cry.
 Not so this figment !—not, that such a fume,
 Instead of giving way to time and health,
 Should eat itself into the life of life,
 As saffron tingeth flesh, blood, bones, and all !
 For see, how he takes up the after-life.
 The man—it is one Lazarus a Jew,
 Sanguine, proportioned, fifty years of age,
 The body's habit wholly laudable,
 As much, indeed, beyond the common health
 As he were made and put aside to show.
 Think, could we penetrate by any drug
 And bathe the wearied soul and worried flesh,
 And bring it clear and fair, by three days' sleep !

Whence has the man the balm that brightens all ?
 This grown man eyes the world now like a child.
 Some elders of his tribe, I should premise,
 Led in their friend, obedient as a sheep,
 To bear my inquisition. While they spoke,
 Now sharply, now with sorrow,—told the case,—
 He listened not except I spoke to him,
 But folded his two hands and let them talk,
 Watching the flies that buzzed : and yet no fool.
 And that 's a sample how his years must go.
 Look if a beggar, in fixed middle-life,
 Should find a treasure,—can he use the same
 With straitened habitude and tastes starved small,
 And take at once to his impoverished brain
 The sudden element that changes things,
 That sets the undreamed-of rapture at his hand,
 And puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust ?
 Is he not such an one as moves to mirth—
 Warily parsimonious, when no need,
 Wasteful as drunkenness at undue times ?
 All prudent counsel as to what befits
 The golden mean, is lost on such an one :
 The man's fantastic will is the man's law.
 So here—we call the treasure knowledge, say,
 Increased beyond the fleshly faculty—
 Heaven opened to a soul while yet on earth,
 Earth forced on a soul's use while seeing heaven :
 The man is witless of the size, the sum,
 The value in proportion of all things,
 Or whether it be little or be much.
 Discourse to him of prodigious armaments

Assembled to besiege his city now,
 And of the passing of a mule with gourds—
 'T is one ! Then take it on the other side,
 Speak of some trifling fact,—he will gaze rapt
 With stupor at its very littleness,
 (Far as I see) as if in that indeed
 He caught prodigious import, whole results ;
 And so will turn to us the bystanders
 In ever the same stupor (note this point)
 That we too see not with his opened eyes.
 Wonder and doubt come wrongly into play,
 Preposterously, at cross purposes.
 Should his child sicken unto death,—why, look
 For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness,
 Or pretermission of the daily craft !
 While a word, gesture, glance from that same child
 At play or in the school or laid asleep,
 Will startle him to an agony of fear,
 Exasperation, just as like. Demand
 The reason why—" 't is but a word," object—
 " A gesture "—he regards thee as our lord
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone,
 Looked at us (dost thou mind ?) when, being young,
 We both would unadvisedly recite
 Some charm's beginning, from that book of his,
 Able to bid the sun throb wide and burst
 All into stars, as suns grown old are wont.
 Thou and the child have each a veil alike
 Thrown o'er your heads, from under which ye both
 Stretch your blind hands and trifle with a match
 Over a mine of Greek fire, did ye know !

He holds on firmly to some thread of life—
 (It is the life to lead perforcedly)
 Which runs across some vast distracting orb
 Of glory on either side that meagre thread,
 Which, conscious of, he must not enter yet—
 The spiritual life around the earthly life :
 The law of that is known to him as this,
 His heart and brain move there, his feet stay here.
 So is the man perplexed with impulses
 Sudden to start off crosswise, not straight on,
 Proclaiming what is right and wrong across,
 And not along, this black thread through the blaze—
 "It should be" baulked by "here it cannot be."
 And oft the man's soul springs into his face
 As if he saw again and heard again
 His sage that bade him "Rise," and he did rise.
 Something, a word, a tick o' the blood within
 Admonishes : then back he sinks at once
 To ashes, who was very fire before,
 In sedulous recurrence to his trade
 Whereby he earneth him the daily bread ;
 And studiously the humbler for that pride,
 Professedly the faultier that he knows
 God's secret, while he holds the thread of life.
 Indeed the especial marking of the man
 Is prone submission to the heavenly will—
 Seeing it, what it is, and why it is.
 'Sayeth, he will wait patient to the last
 For that same death which must restore his being
 To equilibrium, body loosening soul
 Divorced even now by premature full growth :

He will live, nay, it pleaseth him to live
 So long as God please, and just how God please.
 He even seeketh not to please God more
 (Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please.
 Hence, I perceive not he affects to preach
 The doctrine of his sect whate'er it be,
 Make proselytes as madmen thirst to do :
 How can he give his neighbour the real ground,
 His own conviction? Ardent as he is—
 Call his great truth a lie, why, still the old
 "Be it as God please" reassureth him.
 I probed the sore as thy disciple should :
 "How, beast," said I, "this stolid carelessness
 Sufficeth thee, when Rome is on her march
 To stamp out like a little spark thy town,
 Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once?"
 He merely looked with his large eyes on me.
 The man is apathetic, you deduce?
 Contrariwise, he loves both old and young,
 Able and weak, affects the very brutes
 And birds—how say I? flowers of the field—
 As a wise workman recognises tools
 In a master's workshop, loving what they make.
 Thus is the man as harmless as a lamb :
 Only impatient, let him do his best,
 At ignorance and carelessness and sin—
 An indignation which is promptly curbed :
 As when in certain travel I have feigned
 To be an ignoramus in our art
 According to some preconceived design
 And happed to hear the land's practitioners

Steeped in conceit sublimed by ignorance,
 Prattle fantastically on disease,
 Its cause and cure—and I must hold my peace!

Thou wilt object—Why have I not ere this
 Sought out the sage himself, the Nazarene
 Who wrought this cure, inquiring at the source,
 Conferring with the frankness that befits?
 Alas! it grieveth me, the learned leech
 Perished in a tumult many years ago,
 Accused,—our learning's fate,—of wizardry,
 Rebellion, to the setting up a rule
 And creed prodigious as described to me.
 His death, which happened when the earthquake fell
 (Prefiguring, as soon appeared, the loss
 To occult learning in our lord the sage
 Who lived there in the pyramid alone)
 Was wrought by the mad people—that's their wont!
 On vain recourse, as I conjecture it,
 To his tried virtue, for miraculous help—
 How could he stop the earthquake? That's their way!
 The other imputations must be lies:
 But take one, though I loathe to give it thee,
 In mere respect for any good man's fame.
 (And after all, our patient Lazarus
 Is stark mad; should we count on what he says?
 Perhaps not: though in writing to a leech
 'T is well to keep back nothing of a case.)
 This man so cured regards the curer, then,
 As—God forgive me! who but God himself,
 Creator and sustainer of the world, •

That came and dwelt in flesh on it awhile.
 —'Sayeth that such an one was born and lived,
 Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
 Then died, with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
 And yet was . . . what I said nor choose repeat,
 And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
 In hearing of this very Lazarus
 Who saith—but why all this of what he saith ?
 Why write of trivial matters, things of price
 Calling at every moment for remark ?
 I noticed on the margin of a pool
 Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
 Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange !

Thy pardon for this long and tedious case,
 Which, now that I review it, needs must seem
 Unduly dwelt on, prolixly set forth !
 Nor I myself discern in what is writ
 Good cause for the peculiar interest
 And awe indeed this man has touched me with.
 Perhaps the journey's end, the weariness
 Had wrought upon me first. I met him thus :
 I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
 Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
 A moon made like a face with certain spots
 Multiform, manifold and menacing :
 Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
 In this old sleepy town at unawares,
 The man and I. I send thee what is writ.
 Regard it as a chance, a matter risked
 To this ambiguous Syrian : he may lose,

Or steal, or give it thee with equal good.
 Jerusalem's repose shall make amends
 For time this letter wastes, thy time and mine ;
 Till when, once more thy pardon and farewell !

The very God ! think, Abib ; dost thou think ?
 So, the All-Great were the All-Loving too—
 So, through the thunder comes a human voice
 Saying, " O heart I made, a heart beats here !
 " Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself !
 " Thou hast no power nor may'st conceive of mine :
 " But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
 " And thou must love me who have died for thee ! "
 The madman saith He said so : it is strange.

This most interesting and beautiful poem will afford a good illustration of one of the cases of difficulty referred to in the Introduction. The reader is placed in the position of one who has just found this Arabian epistle, and **must** decipher and interpret it without any extraneous aid.

First comes, according to Eastern custom, the name (line 1), then the address (7), with the greeting (15), and mention of articles sent with the letter—all in true Eastern style—with such adjuncts as give a general idea of the school of physiology and medicine to which the writer belongs.

The twenty-first letter had ended at Jericho, and here, accordingly, the twenty-second begins. The date appears as we read on, marked by the expedition of Vespasian and his son Titus against Jerusalem. When Bethany is mentioned, our interest is awakened, and we wonder what is coming ; but to the writer Bethany has no such associations, as is indicated by the light and jocular way in which he marks its distance from Jerusalem, and carelessly proceeds to record the observations it is his main business to make wherever he goes.

Further on, however, we discover that there is something of importance weighing on his mind, which makes him hesitate and debate as to the trust-

worthiness of the messenger he intends to employ; while, at the same time, he is evidently ashamed to tell his master what is troubling him. This accounts for his abruptly ending his letter (determining, for the moment, to say nothing about it); then, unable to refrain, beginning again, yet still trying to conceal the depth of his feeling, and to apologize for what appears in spite of himself.

A long account of the case follows. By this time the reader has begun to have a pretty good idea who "the man" is that "had something in the look of him," and knows that it is a veritable case of one raised from the dead. But Karshish cannot, of course, except under strong compulsion, be expected to take this view; and, accordingly, he begins by looking at it in a strictly professional light—" 'Tis but a case of mania," &c. He naturally supposes that his master will set it down as an ordinary instance of hallucination: "Such cases are diurnal, thou wilt cry." Then he mentions points which strike him as altogether peculiar, certain features of the "after life" which are quite inconsistent with the idea of mania. Instead of being the worse for his mania, this man is immeasurably the better. Could Karshish and his master but penetrate the secret, what physicians they would be! The scene when Lazarus is brought in by the Elders of his tribe—who regard him as a madman, because he is living a life so far above anything they can understand—is inimitable.

In the illustration of the beggar suddenly become rich, Karshish lets out at last that he suspects there must be some truth in the man's story. His patient, he observes, now measures things with no earthly measure, seeing often the small in the great and the great in the small; looking at everything "with larger, other eyes than ours"; accepting with perfect equanimity the very greatest *sorrow*, yet filled with alarm at the least gesture or look which gives token of *sin*, because to him it was like trifling with a match over a mine of Greek fire!

In the next illustration, of the thread of life across an orb of glory, the writer seems to get still fuller insight into the reality of the case—the little thread being, of course, the poor life in Bethany, and the vast orb of glory, the great eternity of God, in which Lazarus was consciously living. And here, again, we have the same lesson as in "The Boy and the Angel." Though conscious of the glory of the great orb, Lazarus does not despise the little duties belonging to the thread of his earthly life. He sedulously follows his trade whereby he earns his daily bread; indeed, the special

characteristic of the man is "prone submission to the Heavenly will." Mark the profound suggestiveness of the lines—

" He even seeketh not to please God more
(Which meaneth, otherwise) than as God please."

He is so calm as to be provoking. At his inquisitor's burst of indignation, he shows no sign of anger or impatience—"He merely looked with his large eyes on me." And yet no apathy about him; a man full of loving interest in all things. (Compare Coleridge's well-known lines: "He prayeth best who loveth best," &c.)

The paragraph which follows introduces us to a region familiar and sacred to us, but foreign and inexplicable to our physician, who refers to it from his own point of view, stigmatizing the claim of "the Nazarene who wrought this cure" as not only false, but monstrous; and yet—and yet—and yet—he cannot get over it; it haunts him. But still he is ashamed to acknowledge it, and so turns abruptly from what he affects to call "trivial matters" to "things of price," like "blue-flowering borage"!

Then he gives another elaborate apology, and tries to account for the hold the phenomenon has taken of him by a reference to his state of body and surroundings when first he met this Lazarus; and, accordingly, professing to care little whether the letter reaches or not, again he closes.

Yet still he cannot rest. The great thought haunts him. "The very God! *think*, Abib." Then follows that consummate passage with which this magnificent poem closes.

After this "Epistle" should by all means be read "A Death in the Desert," too long and too difficult to be inserted here. The surprise awaiting the reader of the parchment "supposed of Pamphylax the Antiochene" will add to the interest of a poem so full of beauty and power.

CHRISTMAS-EVE & EASTER-DAY.

CHRISTMAS-EVE.

Between Christmas-Eve and Easter-Morn lies the earth history of the Incarnate Son of God. Into the shadows of our world He came; and, after a brief night amid its darkness, rose again into the light of heaven. These titles then may well include the whole substance of Christianity. Christmas suggests the thought of heaven come down to earth; Easter, of earth raised up to heaven. "Christmas-Eve" leads naturally to the contemplation of the Christian Faith; "Easter-Day," to the contemplation of the Christian Life.

Each poem turns on an impressive natural phenomenon which suggests the blending of heaven and earth—the one, of the night, a lunar rainbow; the other, of the dawn, the aurora borealis.

The speaker (who is the same throughout the former poem) begins his Christmas-Eve experiences with the flock assembling in "Zion Chapel," a congregation of rude, unlettered people, worshipping with heart and soul indeed, but with little mind and less taste. It is not from choice that he is there. It is a stormy night of wind and rain, from which he has taken shelter in the "lath and plaster entry" of the little meeting house.

I.

* * * *

FIVE minutes full, I waited first
 In the doorway, to escape the rain
 That drove in gusts down the common's centre,
 At the edge of which the chapel stands,
 Before I plucked up heart to enter.
 Heaven knows how many sorts of hands
 Reached past me, groping for the latch
 Of the inner door that hung on catch
 More obstinate the more they fumbled,
 Till, giving way at last with a scold

Of the crazy hinge, in squeezed or tumbled
 One sheep more to the rest in fold,
 And left me irresolute, standing sentry
 In the sheepfold's lath-and-plaster entry,
 Four feet long by two feet wide,
 Partitioned off from the vast inside—
 I blocked up half of it at least.
 No remedy ; the rain kept driving.
 They eyed me much as some wild beast,
 That congregation, still arriving,
 Some of them by the main road, white
 A long way past me into the night,
 Skirting the common, then diverging ;
 Not a few suddenly emerging
 From the common's self through the paling-gaps,
 —They house in the gravel-pits perhaps,
 Where the road stops short with its safeguard border
 Of lamps, as tired of such disorder ;—
 But the most turned in yet more abruptly
 From a certain squalid knot of alleys,
 Where the town's bad blood once slept corruptly,
 Which now the little chapel rallies
 And leads into day again,—its priestliness
 Lending itself to hide their beastliness
 So cleverly (thanks in part to the mason),
 And putting so cheery a whitewashed face on
 Those neophytes too much in lack of it,
 That, where you cross the common as I did,
 And meet the party thus presided,
 " Mount Zion " with Love-lane at the back of it,
 They front you as little disconcerted

As, bound for the hills, her fate averted,
 And her wicked people made to mind him,
 Lot might have marched with Gomorrah behind him.

In the same light and humorous, half irreverent style, he proceeds to a somewhat detailed description of the people and their uncouth worship—not altogether a caricature, but evidently wanting in that sympathy with the good at the heart of it, the thought of which was afterwards so strongly borne in upon his soul. So, he “very soon had enough of it,” and gladly “flung out of the little chapel” “into the fresh night air again.”

IV.

There was a lull in the rain, a lull
 In the wind too ; the moon was risen,
 And would have shone out pure and full,
 But for the ramparted cloud-prison,
 Block on block built up in the West,
 For what purpose the wind knows best,
 Who changes his mind continually.
 And the empty other half of the sky
 Seemed in its silence as if it knew
 What, any moment, might look through
 A chance gap in that fortress-massy :—
 Through its fissures you got hints
 Of the flying moon, by the shifting tints,
 Now, a dull lion-colour, now, brassy
 Burning to yellow, and whitest yellow,
 Like furnace-smoke just ere the flames bellow,
 All a-simmer with intense strain
 To let her through,—then blank again,
 At the hope of her appearance failing.
 Just by the chapel, a break in the railing
 Shows a narrow path directly across ;

'T is ever dry walking there, on the moss—
 Besides, you go gently all the way uphill
 I stooped under and soon felt better ;
 My head grew lighter, my limbs more supple,
 As I walked on, glad to have slipt the fetter.
 My mind was full of the scene I had left,
 That placid flock, that pastor vociferant,
 —How this outside was pure and different !
 The sermon, now—what a mingled weft
 Of good and ill ! Were either less,
 Its fellow had coloured the whole distinctly ;
 But alas for the excellent earnestness,
 And the truths, quite true if stated succinctly,
 But as surely false, in their quaint presentment,
 However to pastor and flock's contentment !
 Say rather, such truths looked false to your eyes,
 With his provings and parallels twisted and twined,
 Till how could you know them, grown double their size
 In the natural fog of the good man's mind,
 Like yonder spots of our roadside lamps,
 Haloed about with the common's damps ?
 Truth remains true, the fault's in the prover ;
 The zeal was good, and the aspiration ;
 And yet, and yet, yet, fifty times over,
 Pharaoh received no demonstration,
 By his Baker's dream of Baskets Three,
 Of the doctrine of the Trinity,—
 Although, as our preacher thus embellished it,
 Apparently his hearers relished it
 With so unfeigned a gust—who knows if
 They did not prefer our friend to Joseph ?

* * * * *

V.

But wherefore be harsh on a single case ?
 After how many modes, this Christmas-Eve,
 Does the selfsame weary thing take place ?
 The same endeavour to make you believe,
 And with much the same effect, no more :
 Each method abundantly convincing,
 As I say, to those convinced before,
 But scarce to be swallowed without wincing
 By the not-as-yet-convinced. For me,
 I have my own church equally :
 And in this church my faith sprang first !
 (I said, as I reached the rising ground,
 And the wind began again, with a burst
 Of rain in my face, and a glad rebound
 From the heart beneath, as if, God speeding me,
 I entered his church-door, nature leading me)
 —In youth I looked to these very skies,
 And probing their immensities,
 I found God there, his visible power ;
 Yet felt in my heart, amid all its sense
 Of the power, an equal evidence
 That his love, there too, was the nobler dower.

Then follows a long and rather abstruse passage, leading up to the following lofty and inspiring conclusion:—

So, gazing up, in my youth, at love
 As seen through power, ever above
 All modes which make it manifest,
 My soul brought all to a single test—
 That he, the Eternal First and Last,
 Who, in his power, had so surpassed

All man conceives of what is might,—
 Whose wisdom, too, showed infinite,
 —Would prove as infinitely good ;
 Would never, (my soul understood,)
 With power to work all love desires,
 Bestow e'en less than man requires ;
 That he who endlessly was teaching,
 Above my spirit's utmost reaching,
 What love can do in the leaf or stone,
 (So that to master this alone,
 This done in the stone or leaf for me,
 I must go on learning endlessly)
 Would never need that I, in turn,
 Should point him out defect unheeded,
 And show that God had yet to learn
 What the meanest human creature needed,
 —Not life, to wit, for a few short years,
 Tracking his way through doubts and fears,
 While the stupid earth on which I stay
 Suffers no change, but passive adds
 Its myriad years to myriads,
 Though I, he gave it to, decay,
 Seeing death come and choose about me,
 And my dearest ones depart without me.
 No : love which, on earth, amid all the shows of it,
 Has ever been seen the sole good of life in it,
 The love, ever growing there, spite of the strife in it,
 Shall arise, made perfect, from death's repose of it.
 And I shall behold thee, face to face,
 O God, and in thy light retrace
 How in all I loved here, still wast thou !

Whom pressing to, then, as I fain would now,
 I shall find as able to satiate
 The love, thy gift, as my spirit's wonder
 Thou art able to quicken and sublimate,
 With this sky of thine, that I now walk under,
 And glory in thee for, as I gaze
 Thus, thus ! Oh, let men keep their ways
 Of seeking thee in a narrow shrine—
 Be this my way ! And this is mine !

The lunar rainbow, so wonderfully described in the next stanza, is the occasion and point of departure of the poetic vision or ecstasy which occupies the remainder of the poem—

VI.

For lo, what think you ? suddenly
 The rain and the wind ceased, and the sky
 Received at once the full fruition
 Of the moon's consummate apparition.
 The black cloud-barricade was riven,
 Ruined beneath her feet, and driven
 Deep in the West ; while, bare and breathless,
 North and South and East lay ready
 For a glorious thing that, dauntless, deathless,
 Sprang across them and stood steady.
 'T was a moon-rainbow, vast and perfect,
 From heaven to heaven extending, perfect
 As the mother-moon's self, full in face.
 It rose, distinctly at the base
 With its seven proper colours chorded,
 Which still, in the rising, were compressed,
 Until at last they coalesced,

And supreme the spectral creature lorded
 In a triumph of whitest white,—
 Above which intervened the night.
 But above night too, like only the next,
 The second of a wondrous sequence,
 Reaching in rare and rarer frequency,
 Till the heaven of heavens were circumflexed,
 Another rainbow rose, a mightier,
 Fainter, flushier and flightier,—
 Rapture dying along its verge.
 Oh, whose foot shall I see emerge,
 Whose, from the straining topmost dark,
 On to the keystone of that arc?

He did see One emerging from the glory—

VIII.

All at once I looked up with terror.
 He was there,
 He himself with his human air,
 On the narrow pathway, just before.
 I saw the back of him, no more—
 He had left the chapel, then, as I.
 I forgot all about the sky.
 No face : only the sight
 Of a sweepy garment, vast and white,
 With a hem that I could recognise.
 I felt terror, no surprise ;
 My mind filled with the cataract,
 At one bound of the mighty fact.
 "I remember, he did say

Doubtless, that, to this world's end,
 Where two or three should meet and pray,
 He would be in the midst, their friend ;
 Certainly he was there with them ! ”
 And my pulses leaped for joy
 Of the golden thought without alloy,
 That I saw his very vesture's hem.
 Then rushed the blood black, cold and clear,
 With a fresh enhancing shiver of fear ;
 And I hastened, cried out while I pressed
 To the salvation of the vest,
 “ But not so, Lord ! It cannot be
 “ That thou, indeed, art leaving me—
 “ Me, that have despised thy friends ! ”

The confession of his sin in despising *His* friends in the little chapel is speedily followed by a gracious token of forgiveness :—

IX.

* * * *

The whole face turned upon me full.
 And I spread myself beneath it,
 As when the bleacher spreads, to seethe it
 In the cleansing sun, his wool,—
 Steeps in the flood of noontide whiteness
 Some defiled, discoloured web—
 So lay I, saturate with brightness.

His sin thus purged (how exquisitely wrought out the lovely simile of the sun-cleansed wool !), he is “ caught up in the whirl and drift of the vesture's amplitude,” and thus clinging to the garment's hem, is carried across land and sea—to a scene so complete a contrast to the one he has just left that he is confused, and some time elapses before he discovers that he is in front of St. Peter's at Rome :—

X.

And so we crossed the world and stopped.
 For where am I, in city or plain,
 Since I am 'ware of the world again?
 And what is this that rises propped
 With pillars of prodigious girth?
 Is it really on the earth,
 This miraculous Dome of God?
 Has the angel's measuring-rod
 Which numbered cubits, gem from gem,
 'Twixt the gates of the New Jerusalem,
 Meted it out,—and what he meted,
 Have the sons of men completed?
 —Binding, ever as he bade,
 Columns in the colonnade
 With arms wide open to embrace
 The entry of the human race
 To the breast of . . . what is it, yon building,
 Ablaze in front, all paint and gilding,
 With marble for brick, and stones of price
 For garniture of the edifice?
 Now I see; it is no dream;
 It stands there and it does not seem:
 For ever, in pictures, thus it looks,
 And thus I have read of it in books
 Often in England, leagues away,
 And wondered how these fountains play,
 Growing up eternally
 Each to a musical water-tree,
 Whose blossoms drop, a glittering boon,

Before my eyes, in the light of the moon,
To the granite lavers underneath.

There follows a description of the worship in the great cathedral—not now, as before, unsympathetic and merely critical, but giving evidence of the liveliest appreciation of the feelings of the intelligent and devout ritualist, as in the following passage :—

Earth breaks up, time drops away,
In flows heaven, with its new day
Of endless life, when he who trod,
Very man and very God,
This earth in weakness, shame and pain,
Dying the death whose signs remain
Up yonder on the accursed tree,—
Shall come again, no more to be
Of captivity the thrall,
But the one God, All in all,
King of kings, Lord of lords,
As his servant John received the words,
“I died, and live for evermore!”

Still he cannot enter into it. He is left outside the door. Distracted with conflicting emotions, his reason repelled by the superstition, his spirit attracted by the lofty devotion which he discovers at the heart of the too gorgeous ritual—he cannot make up his mind whether he should join them for the one reason, or shun them for the other—

XI.

* * * *

Though Rome's gross yoke
Drops off, no more to be endured,
Her teaching is not so obscured
By errors and perversities,
That no truth shines athwart the lies :
And he, whose eye detects a spark

Even where, to man's, the whole seems dark,
 May well see flame where each beholder
 Acknowledges the embers smoulder.
 But I, a mere man, fear to quit
 The clue God gave me as most fit
 To guide my footsteps through life's maze,
 Because himself discerns all ways
 Open to reach him : I, a man
 Able to mark where faith began
 To swerve aside, till from its summit
 Judgment drops her damning plummet,
 Pronouncing such a fatal space
 Departed from the founder's base :
 He will not bid me enter too,
 But rather sit, as now I do,
 Awaiting his return outside.
 —'T was thus my reason straight replied
 And joyously I turned, and pressed
 The garment's skirt upon my breast,
 Until, afresh its light suffusing me,
 My heart cried "What has been abusing me
 That I should wait here lonely and coldly,
 Instead of rising, entering boldly,
 Baring truth's face, and letting drift
 Her veils of lies as they choose to shift ?
 Do these men praise him ? I will raise
 My voice up to their point of praise !
 I see the error ; but above
 The scope of error, see the love.—
 Oh, love of those first Christian days !
 —Fanned so soon into a blaze,

From the spark preserved by the trampled sect,
 That the antique sovereign Intellect
 Which then sat ruling in the world,
 Like a change in dreams, was hurled
 From the throne he reigned upon :
 You looked up and he was gone.

The remainder of the stanza is taken up with a most eloquent, but somewhat difficult passage, illustrating the triumph of the new Love over the old Culture. In the following stanza he makes up his mind that he "will feast his love, then depart elsewhere, that his intellect may find its share"; so the next transition, by the same mode of rapture, is to a German University. What he sees there provokes again his latent humour:—

XIV.

Alone! I am left alone once more—
 (Save for the garment's extreme fold
 Abandoned still to bless my hold)
 Alone, beside the entrance-door
 Of a sort of temple,—perhaps a college,
 —Like nothing I ever saw before
 At home in England, to my knowledge.
 The tall old quaint irregular town!
 It may be . . . though which, I can't affirm . . . any
 Of the famous middle-age towns of Germany;
 And this flight of stairs where I sit down,
 Is it Halle, Weimar, Cassel, Frankfort,
 Or Göttingen, I have to thank for 't?
 It may be Göttingen,—most likely.
 Through the open door I catch obliquely
 Glimpses of a lecture-hall;
 And not a bad assembly neither,
 Ranged decent and symmetrical

On benches, waiting what 's to see there ;
 Which, holding still by the vesture's hem,
 I also resolve to see with them,
 Cautious this time how I suffer to slip
 The chance of joining in fellowship
 With any that call themselves his friends ;
 As these folks do, I have a notion.
 But hist—a buzzing and emotion !
 All settle themselves, the while ascends
 By the creaking rail to the lecture-desk,
 Step by step, deliberate
 Because of his cranium's over-freight,
 Three parts sublime to one grotesque,
 If I have proved an accurate guesser,
 The hawk-nosed, high-cheek-boned Professor.
 I felt at once as if there ran
 A shoot of love from my heart to the man—
 That sallow virgin-minded studious
 Martyr to mild enthusiasm,
 As he uttered a kind of cough-preludious
 That woke my sympathetic spasm,
 (Beside some spitting that made me sorry)
 And stood, surveying his auditory
 With a wan pure look, well nigh celestial,—
 Those blue eyes had survived so much !
 While, under the foot they could not smutch,
 Lay all the fleshly and the bestial.
 Over he bowed, and arranged his notes,
 Till the auditory's clearing of throats
 Was done with, died into a silence ;
 And, when each glance was upward sent,

Each bearded mouth composed intent,
 And a pin might be heard drop half a mile hence
 He pushed back higher his spectacles,
 Let the eyes stream out like lamps from cells,
 And giving his head of hair—a hake
 Of undressed tow, for colour and quantity—
 One rapid and impatient shake,
 (As our own young England adjusts a jaunty tie
 When about to impart, on mature digestion,
 Some thrilling view of the surplice-question)
 —The Professor's grave voice, sweet though hoarse,
 Broke into his Christmas-Eve discourse.

The stanza which follows gives an account of the discourse, which is a learned discussion of "this Myth of Christ," "which, when reason had strained and abated it of foreign matter, left, for residuum, a man!—a right true man," but nothing more. He has no difficulty in determining his duty here ("this time He would not bid me enter.") The religious atmosphere in which Papist and Dissenter live may be far from pure, in the one case for one reason, and in the other for the opposite; but either of the two is immeasurably better than the vacuum left when the Critic has done his work of destruction. Then follows a long argument to show the unreasonableness of denying the divinity of Christ, only a part of which can be given here.

XVI.

* * * * *

This time he would not bid me enter
 The exhausted air-bell of the Critic.
 Truth's atmosphere may grow mephitic
 When Papist struggles with Dissenter,
 Impregnating its pristine clarity,
 —One, by his daily fare's vulgarity,
 Its gust of broken meat and garlic;

—One, by his soul's too-much presuming
 To turn the frankincense's fuming
 And vapours of the candle starlike
 Into the cloud her wings she buoys on.
 Each, that thus sets the pure air seething,
 May poison it for healthy breathing—
 But the Critic leaves no air to poison ;
 Pumps out with ruthless ingenuity
 Atom by atom, and leaves you—vacuity.
 Thus much of Christ, does he reject ?
 And what retain ? His intellect ?
 What is it I must reverence duly ?
 Poor intellect for worship, truly,
 Which tells me simply what was told
 (If mere morality, bereft
 Of the God in Christ, be all that 's left)
 Elsewhere by voices manifold ;
 With this advantage, that the stater
 Made nowise the important stumble
 Of adding, he, the sage and humble,
 Was also one with the Creator.
 You urge Christ's followers' simplicity :
 But how does shifting blame, evade it ?
 Have wisdom's words no more felicity ?
 The stumbling-block, his speech—who laid it ?
 How comes it that for one found able
 To sift the truth of it from fable,
 Millions believe it to the letter ?
 Christ's goodness, then—does that fare better ?
 Strange goodness, which upon the score
 Of being goodness, the mere due

Of man to fellow-man, much more
 To God,—should take another view
 Of its possessor's privilege,
 And bid him rule his race! You pledge
 Your fealty to such rule? What, all—
 From heavenly John and Attic Paul,
 And that brave weather-battered Peter
 Whose stout faith only stood completer
 For buffets, sinning to be pardoned,
 As, more his hands hauled nets, they hardened,—
 All, down to you, the man of men,
 Professing here at Göttingen,
 Compose Christ's flock! They, you and I,
 Are sheep of a good man!

Reasonings that grow out of the main discussion are continued throughout stanzas 17—20, till once more he is caught up and carried back to his original starting point. The remainder of the poem can now be given without interruption, and will be readily understood. (The exquisite development of the simile of the cup and the water will be specially noted, as also the charitable wish so strikingly expressed on behalf of the poor Professor, that before the end comes he may know Christ as "the God of salvation.")

XXI.

And I caught
 At the flying robe, and unrepelled
 Was lapped again in its folds full-fraught
 With warmth and wonder and delight,
 God's mercy being infinite.
 For scarce had the words escaped my tongue,
 When, at a passionate bound, I sprung
 Out of the wandering world of rain,
 Into the little chapel again.

XXII.

How else was I found there, bolt upright.
On my bench, as if I had never left it ?
—Never flung out on the common at night
Nor met the storm and wedge-like cleft it,
Seen the raree-show of Peter's successor,
Or the laboratory of the Professor !
For the Vision, that was true, I wist,
True as that heaven and earth exist.
There sat my friend, the yellow and tall,
With his neck and its wen in the selfsame place ;
Yet my nearest neighbour's cheek showed gall.
She had slid away a contemptuous space :
And the old fat woman, late so placable,
Eyed me with symptoms, hardly mistakable,
Of her milk of kindness turning rancid.
In short, a spectator might have fancied
That I had nodded, betrayed by slumber,
Yet kept my seat, a warning ghastly,
Through the heads of the sermon, nine in number,
And woke up now at the tenth and lastly.
But again, could such disgrace have happened ?
Each friend at my elbow had surely nudged it ;
And, as for the sermon, where did my nap end ?
Unless I heard it, could I have judged it ?
Could I report as I do at the close,
First, the preacher speaks through his nose :
Second, his gesture is too emphatic :
Thirdly, to waive what 's pedagogic,
The subject-matter itself lacks logic :

Fourthly, the English is ungrammatic.
 Great news ! the preacher is found no Pascal,
 Whom, if I pleased, I might to the task call
 Of making square to a finite eye
 The circle of infinity,
 And find so, all-but-just-succeeding !
 Great news ! the sermon proves no reading
 Where bee-like in the flowers I may bury me,
 Like Taylor's the immortal Jeremy !
 And now that I know the very worst of him,
 What was it I thought to obtain at first of him ?
 Ha ! Is God mocked, as he asks ?
 Shall I take on me to change his tasks,
 And dare, despatched to a river-head
 For a simple draught of the element,
 Neglect the thing for which he sent,
 And return with another thing instead ?—
 Saying, " Because the water found
 " Welling up from underground,
 " Is mingled with the taints of earth,
 " While thou, I know, dost laugh at dearth,
 " And couldst, at wink or word, convulse
 " The world with the leap of a river-pulse,—
 " Therefore I turned from the oozy muds,
 " And bring thee a chalice I found, instead :
 " See the brave veins in the breccia ruddy !
 " One would suppose that the marble bled.
 " What matters the water ? A hope I have nursed :
 " The waterless cup will quench my thirst."
 —Better have knelt at the poorest stream
 That trickles in pain from the straitest rift !

For the less or the more is all God's gift,
 Who blocks up or breaks wide the granite-seam.
 And here, is there water or not, to drink ?
 I then, in ignorance and weakness,
 Taking God's help, have attained to think
 My heart does best to receive in meekness
 That mode of worship, as most to his mind,
 Where, earthly aids being cast behind,
 His All in All appears serene
 With the thinnest human veil between,
 Letting the mystic lamps, the seven,
 The many motions of his spirit,
 Pass, as they list, to earth from heaven.
 For the preacher's merit or demerit,
 It were to be wished the flaws were fewer
 In the earthen vessel, holding treasure,
 Which lies as safe in a golden ewer ;
 But the main thing is, does it hold good measure ?
 Heaven soon sets right all other matters !—
 Ask, else, these ruins of humanity,
 This flesh worn out to rags and tatters,
 This soul at struggle with insanity,
 Who thence take comfort, can I doubt ?
 Which an empire gained, were a loss without.
 May it be mine ! And let us hope
 That no worse blessing befall the Pope,
 Turn'd sick at last of to-day's buffoonery,
 Of posturings and petticoatings,
 Beside his Bourbon bully's gloatings
 In the bloody orgies of drunk poltroonery !
 Nor may the Professor forego its peace

At Göttingen presently, when, in the dusk
 Of his life, if his cough, as I fear, should increase
 Prophesied of by that horrible husk—
 When thicker and thicker the darkness fills
 The world through his misty spectacles,
 And he gropes for something more substantial
 Than a fable, myth or personification,—
 May Christ do for him what no mere man shall,
 And stand confessed as the God of salvation !
 Meantime, in the still recurring fear
 Lest myself, at unawares, be found,
 While attacking the choice of my neighbours round,
 With none of my own made—I choose here !
 The giving out of the hymn reclaims me ;
 I have done : and if any blames me,
 Thinking that merely to touch in brevity
 The topics I dwell on, were unlawful,—
 Or worse, that I trench, with undue levity,
 On the bounds of the holy and the awful,—
 I praise the heart, and pity the head of him,
 And refer myself to THEE, instead of him,
 Who head and heart alike discernest,
 Looking below light speech we utter,
 When frothy spume and frequent sputter
 Prove that the soul's depths boil in earnest !
 May truth shine out, stand ever before us !
 I put up pencil and join chorus
 To Hepzibah tune, without further apology,
 The last five verses of the third section
 Of the seventeenth hymn of Whitfield's Collection,
 To conclude with the doxology.

EASTER-DAY.

As Christmas-Eve has suggested the subject of the Christian Faith, Easter-Day gives occasion to a discussion concerning the Christian Life—the life of those who are “risen with Christ.” The poem is in substance a conversation or discussion between two persons, one of whom (a thorough Christian) finds it very hard, while the other (who takes a much lower and more common-place view of spiritual things) thinks it quite easy, to be a Christian. It is not, however, in the form of a conversation. As usual in Browning’s work, one speaks, stating his own views and quoting the other’s, which are therefore distinguished from his own (except when he quotes, as he sometimes does, from himself) by quotation marks. The argument is too abstruse to be followed out in all its ramifications; but enough of it can be given to render quite intelligible the extracts from it which we find it possible to give. The opening sentence will give the theme:—

I.

How very hard it is, to be
 A Christian! Hard for you and me,
 —Not the mere task of making real
 That duty up to its ideal,
 Effecting thus, complete and whole,
 A purpose of the human soul—
 For that is always hard to do;
 But hard, I mean, for me and you
 To realize it, more or less,
 With even the moderate success
 Which commonly repays our strife
 To carry out the aims of life.

After some preliminary discussion about faith in its relation to life, the easy-going friend takes this position:—

VI.

* * * * *

"Renounce the world !

"Were that a mighty hardship? Plan

"A pleasant life, and straight some man

"Beside you, with, if he thought fit,

"Abundant means to compass it,

"Shall turn deliberate aside

"To try and live as, if you tried

"You clearly might, yet most despise.

"One friend of mine wears out his eyes,

"Slighting the stupid joys of sense,

"In patient hope that, ten years hence,

" 'Somewhat completer,' he may say,

"My list of *coleoptera* !'

"While just the other who most laughs

"At him, above all epitaphs

"Aspires to have his tomb describe

"Himself as sole among the tribe

"Of snuffbox-fanciers, who possessed

"A Grignon with the Regent's crest.

"So that, subduing, as you want,

"Whatever stands predominant

"Among my earthly appetites

"For tastes and smells and sounds and sights,

"I shall be doing that alone,

"To gain a palm-branch and a throne,

"Which fifty people undertake

"To do, and gladly, for the sake

"Of giving a Semitic guess,

"Or playing pawns at blindfold chess."

The stanza which follows gives the speaker's answer, ending with this striking passage :—

“Renounce the world!”—Ah, were it done
By merely cutting one by one
Your limbs off, with your wise head last,
How easy were it!—how soon past,
If once in the believing mood!

To which the other replies by reproaching him for ingratitude to God, who really asks us to give up nothing that is good, but only to observe such moderation in our pleasures that life is all the more enjoyable, while sorrow almost disappears, transfigured in the light of love. This answer has such a ring of the true metal in it, that the speaker begins his rejoinder with the question, “Do you say this, or I?” and then proceeds (in a passage of wonderful power) to expose the superficiality of the view he is endeavouring to support.

VIII.

Do you say this, or I?—Oh, you!
Then, what, my friend?—(thus I pursue
Our parley)—you indeed opine
That the Eternal and Divine
Did, eighteen centuries ago,
In very truth . . . Enough! you know
The all-stupendous tale,—that Birth,
That Life, that Death! And all, the earth
Shuddered at,—all, the heavens grew black
Rather than see; all, nature's rack
And throe at dissolution's brink
Attested,—all took place, you think,
Only to give our joys a zest,
And prove our sorrows for the best?
We differ, then! Were I, still pale
And heartstruck at the dreadful tale,
Waiting to hear God's voice declare

What horror followed for my share,
 As implicated in the deed,
 Apart from other sins,—concede
 That if he blacked out in a blot
 My brief life's pleasantness, 't were not
 So very disproportionate !
 Or there might be another fate—
 I certainly could understand
 (If fancies were the thing in hand)
 How God might save, at that day's price,
 The impure in their impurities,
 Give formal licence and complete
 To choose the fair and pick the sweet.
 But there be certain words, broad, plain,
 Uttered again and yet again,
 Hard to mistake or overgloss—
 Announcing this world's gain for loss,
 And bidding us reject the same :
 The whole world lieth (they proclaim)
 In wickedness,—come out of it !
 Turn a deaf ear, if you think fit,
 But I who thrill through every nerve
 At thought of what deaf ears deserve,—
 How do you counsel in the case ?

The counsel was, to choose by all means the safe side, by giving up everything as literally as did the martyrs in the early days of persecution ; at which a shudder of doubt comes over him, and he answers (note the very remarkable illustration of the moles and the grasshoppers) :—

X.

* * * * *

If after all we should mistake,
 And so renounce life for the sake

Of death and nothing else? You hear
 Our friends we jeered at, send the jeer
 Back to ourselves with good effect—
 “There were my beetles to collect!
 “My box—a trifle, I confess,
 “But here I hold it, ne’ertheless!”
 Poor idiots, (let us pluck up heart
 And answer) we, the better part,
 Have chosen, though ’t were only hope,—
 Nor envy moles like you that grope
 Amid your veritable muck,
 More than the grasshoppers would truck,
 For yours, their passionate life away,
 That spends itself in leaps all day
 To reach the sun, you want the eyes
 To see, as they the wings to rise
 And match the noble hearts of them!
 Thus the contemner we contemn,—
 And, when doubt strikes us, thus we ward
 Its stroke off, caught upon our guard,
 —Not struck enough to overturn
 Our faith, but shake it—make us learn
 What I began with, and, I wis,
 End, having proved,—how hard it is
 To be a Christian!

His friend now reproaches him with the thanklessness of the task he is undertaking, in trying to so little purpose to disturb the peace of a man who has no such high-flown views of duty; whereupon he relates to him a wonderful experience he had on Easter-morn three years before:—

XIV.

I commence
 By trying to inform you, whence

It comes that every Easter-night
 As now, I sit up, watch, till light,
 Upon those chimney-stacks and roofs,
 Give, through my window-pane, grey proofs
 That Easter-day is breaking slow.
 On such a night three years ago,
 It chanced that I had cause to cross
 The common, where the chapel was,
 Our friend spoke of, the other day—
 You 've not forgotten, I dare say.
 I fell to musing of the time
 So close, the blessed matin-prime
 All hearts leap up at, in some guise—
 One could not well do otherwise.
 Insensibly my thoughts were bent
 Toward the main point ; I overwent
 Much the same ground of reasoning
 As you and I just now. One thing
 Remained, however—one that tasked
 My soul to answer ; and I asked,
 Fairly and frankly, what might be
 That History, that Faith, to me
 —Me there—not me in some domain
 Built up and peopled by my brain,
 Weighing its merits as one weighs
 Mere theories for blame or praise,
 —The kingcraft of the Lucumons,
 Or Fourier's scheme, its pros and cons,—
 But my faith there, or none at all.
 "How were my case, now, did I fall
 "Dead here, this minute—should I lie
 "Faithful or faithless ?"

To this solemn question a friendly answer seems to come from Common Sense, assuring him that all would be right ; for, though his ship might not sail very grandly into the eternal haven, it was enough if, in whatever state of wreck, it arrived at all ; which leads him to utter the deepest wish and expectation of his heart :—

Would the ship reach home !
 I wish indeed “ God’s kingdom come—”
 The day when I shall see appear
 His bidding, as my duty, clear
 From doubt ! And it shall dawn, that day,
 Some future season ; Easter may
 Prove, not impossibly, the time—
 Yes, that were striking—fates would chime
 So aptly ! Easter-morn, to bring
 The Judgment !—deeper in the spring
 Than now, however, when there ’s snow
 Capping the hills ; for earth must show
 All signs of meaning to pursue
 Her tasks as she was wont to do
 —The skylark, taken by surprise
 As we ourselves, shall recognise
 Sudden the end. For suddenly
 It comes ; the dreadfulness must be
 In that ; all warrants the belief—
 “ At night it cometh like a thief.”
 I fancy why the trumpet blows ;
 —Plainly, to wake one. From repose
 We shall start up, at last awake
 From life, that insane dream we take
 For waking now.

* * * * *

The next stanza gives the famous description of the fiery aurora, when even “ the south firmament with north-fire did its wings reflodge ! ” (Compare description of lunar rainbow in “ Christmas-Eve.”) He feels sure that his wish is realized, and the Judgment Day has come !

XV.

* * * * *

I found

Suddenly all the midnight round
 One fire. The dome of heaven had stood
 As made up of a multitude
 Of handbreadth cloudlets, one vast rack
 Of ripples infinite and black,
 From sky to sky. Sudden there went,
 Like horror and astonishment,
 A fierce vindictive scribble of red
 Quick flame across, as if one said
 (The angry scribe of Judgment) "There—
 "Burn it!" And straight I was aware
 That the whole ribwork round, minute
 Cloud touching cloud beyond compute,
 Was tinted, each with its own spot
 Of burning at the core, till clot
 Jammed against clot, and spilt its fire
 Over all heaven, which 'gan suspire
 As fanned to measure equable,—
 Just so great conflagrations kill
 Night overhead, and rise and sink,
 Reflected. Now the fire would shrink
 And wither off the blasted face
 Of heaven, and I distinct might trace
 The sharp black ridgy outlines left
 Unburned like network—then, each cleft
 The fire had been sucked back into,
 Regorged, and out it surging flew
 Furiously, and night writhed inflamed,

Till, tolerating to be tamed
 No longer, certain rays world-wide
 Shot downwardly. On every side
 Caught past escape, the earth was lit ;
 As if a dragon's nostril split,
 And all his famished ire o'erflowed ;
 Then as he winced at his lord's goad,
 Back he inhaled : whereat I found
 The clouds into vast pillars bound,
 Based on the corners of the earth,
 Propping the skies at top : a dearth
 Of fire i' the violet intervals,
 Leaving exposed the utmost walls
 Of time, about to tumble in
 And end the world.

XVI.

I felt begin
 The Judgment-Day : to retrocede
 Was too late now. "In very deed,"
 (I uttered to myself) "that Day !"
 The intuition burned away
 All darkness from my spirit too :
 There, stood I, found and fixed, I knew,
 Choosing the world. The choice was made ;
 And naked and disguiseless stayed,
 And unevadable, the fact.
 My brain held ne'ertheless compact
 Its senses, nor my heart declined
 Its office ; rather, both combined
 To help me in this juncture. I

Lost not a second,—agony
 Gave boldness : since my life had end
 And my choice with it—best defend,
 Applaud both ! I resolved to say,
 “ So was I framed by thee, such way
 “ I put to use thy senses here !
 “ It was so beautiful, so near,
 “ Thy world,—what could I then but choose
 “ My part there ? Nor did I refuse
 “ To look above the transient boon
 “ Of time ; but it was hard so soon
 “ As in a short life, to give up
 “ Such beauty : I could put the cup
 “ Undrained of half its fulness, by ;
 “ But, to renounce it utterly,
 “ —That was too hard ! Nor did the cry
 “ Which bade renounce it, touch my brain
 “ Authentically deep and plain
 “ Enough to make my lips let go.
 “ But thou, who knowest all, dost know
 “ Whether I was not, life’s brief while,
 “ Endeavouring to reconcile
 “ Those lips (too tardily, alas !)
 “ To letting the dear remnant pass,
 “ One day,—some drops of earthly good
 “ Untasted ! Is it for this mood,
 “ That thou, whose earth delights so well,
 “ Hast made its complement a hell ? ”

XVII.

A final belch of fire like blood,

Overbroke all heaven in one flood
 Of doom. Then fire was sky, and sky
 Fire, and both, one brief ecstasy,
 Then ashes. But I heard no noise
 (Whatever was) because a voice
 Beside me spoke thus, "Life is done,
 "Time ends, Eternity's begun,
 "And thou art judged for evermore."

As in "Christmas-Eve," the question rises of a Presence in the awful scene.

XIX.

* * * * *

What if, 'twixt skies
 And prostrate earth, he should surprise
 The imaged vapour, head to foot,
 Surveying, motionless and mute,
 Its work, ere, in a whirlwind rapt
 It vanish up again?—So hapt
 My chance. HE stood there. Like the smoke
 Pillared o'er Sodom, when day broke,—
 I saw him. One magnific pall
 Mantled in massive fold and fall
 His head, and coiled in snaky swathes
 About his feet: night's black, that bathes
 All else, broke, grizzled with despair,
 Against the soul of blackness there.
 A gesture told the mood within—
 That wrapped right hand which based the chin
 That intense meditation fixed
 On his procedure,—pity mixed
 With the fulfilment of decree.

Motionless, thus, he spoke to me,
 Who fell before his feet, a mass,
 No man now.

Then follows the Sentence, excluding him from the heaven of spirit, and leaving him to the world of sense, hopeless for ever of anything higher—a sentence which seemed to him at first to be rather a reward than a punishment, as he thought of “earth’s resources—vast exhaustless beauty, endless change of wonder !” Even a fern-leaf a museum in itself !

The answer of the Voice to this shallow thought leads us into the very loftiest regions of the imagination, suggesting views of the future of the redeemed which make the soul thrill with eager expectancy—

XXIV.

Then the Voice, “Welcome so to rate
 “The arras-folds that variegate
 “The earth, God’s antechamber, well !
 “The wise, who waited there, could tell
 “By these, what royalties in store
 “Lay one step past the entrance-door.
 “For whom, was reckoned, not too much,
 “This life’s munificence ? For such
 “As thou,—a race, whereof scarce one
 “Was able, in a million,
 “To feel that any marvel lay
 “In objects round his feet all day ;
 “Scarce one in many millions more,
 “Willing, if able, to explore
 “The secreter, minuter charm !
 “—Brave souls, a fern-leaf could disarm
 “Of power to cope with God’s intent,—
 “Or scared if the south firmament
 “With north-fire did its wings reflodge !

"All partial beauty was a pledge
 "Of beauty in its plenitude :
 "But since the pledge sufficed thy mood,
 "Retain it ! plenitude be theirs
 "Who looked above ! "

At this answer "sharp despairs shot through" him, at the thought of what he had missed ; but on reflection he finds comfort in the prospect of the possibilities of Art. Again the inexorable voice is heard, pronouncing loss unspeakable. Even if he could be a Michelangelo (Buonarroti), it would be only the initial earthly stage of his development that was possible for him. (The whole passage is magnificent ; but perhaps the exquisitely wrought-out illustration of the lizard in its narrow rock-chamber will be most enjoyed.)

XXVI.

* * * *

"If such his soul's capacities,
 "Even while he trod the earth,—think, now,
 "What pomp in Buonarroti's brow,
 "With its new palace-brain where dwells
 "Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
 "That crumbled with the transient clay !
 "What visions will his right hand's sway
 "Still turn to form, as still they burst
 "Upon him ? How will he quench thirst,
 "Titanically infantine,
 "Laid at the breast of the Divine ?
 "Does it confound thee,—this first page
 "Emblazoning man's heritage ?—
 "Can this alone absorb thy sight,
 "As pages were not infinite,—
 "Like the omnipotence which tasks
 "Itself, to furnish all that asks

"The soul it means to satiate?
 "What was the world, the starry state
 "Of the broad skies,—what, all displays
 "Of power and beauty intermixed,
 "Which now thy soul is chained betwixt,—
 "What else than needful furniture
 "For life's first stage? God's work, be sure,
 "No more spreads wasted, than falls scant!
 "He filled, did not exceed, man's want
 "Of beauty in this life. But through
 "Life pierce,—and what has earth to do,
 "Its utmost beauty's appanage,
 "With the requirement of next stage?
 "Did God pronounce earth 'very good'?
 "Needs must it be, while understood
 "For man's preparatory state;
 "Nothing to heighten nor abate:
 "Transfer the same completeness here,
 "To serve a new state's use,—and drear
 "Deficiency gapes every side!
 "The good, tried once, were bad, retried.
 "See the enwrapping rocky niche,
 "Sufficient for the sleep, in which
 "The lizard breathes for ages safe:
 "Split the mould—and as this would chafe
 "The creature's new world-widened sense,
 "One minute after day dispense
 "The thousand sounds and sights that broke
 "In on him at the chisel's stroke,—
 "So, in God's eye, the earth's first stuff
 "Was, neither more nor less, enough

"To house man's soul, man's need fulfil.
 "Man reckoned it immeasurable?
 "So thinks the lizard of his vault!
 "Could God be taken in default,
 "Short of contrivances, by you,—
 "Or reached, ere ready to pursue
 "His progress through eternity?
 "That chambered rock, the lizard's world,
 "Your easy mallet's blow has hurled
 "To nothingness for ever; so,
 "Has God abolished at a blow
 "This world, wherein his saints were pent,—
 "Who, though found grateful and content,
 "With the provision there, as thou,
 "Yet knew he would not disallow
 "Their spirit's hunger, felt as well,—
 "Unsated,—not unsatable,
 "As paradise gives proof. Deride
 "Their choice now, thou who sit'st outside!"

The poem proceeds in the same lofty strain, till—humbled to the dust at the thought of the unutterable folly of his choice, especially in view of the love of God expressed on Calvary, a love which he had slighted in the happy days gone by—he presents the touching plea of the 31st stanza, the result of which appears in what follows, spoken of by Professor Kirkman of Cambridge, as "the splendid consummation of Easter-Day so closely resembling the well-known crisis in Faust."

XXXI.

And I cowered deprecatingly—
 "Thou Love of God! Or let me die,
 "Or grant what shall seem heaven almost!

" Let me not know that all is lost,
 " Though lost it be—leave me not tied
 " To this despair, this corpse-like bride !
 " Let that old life seem mine—no more—
 " With limitation as before,
 " With darkness, hunger, toil, distress :
 " Be all the earth a wilderness !
 " Only let me go on, go on,
 " Still hoping ever and anon
 " To reach one eve the Better Land ! "

XXXII.

Then did the form expand, expand—
 I knew him through the dread disguise
 As the whole God within his eyes
 Embraced me.

XXXIII.

When I lived again,
 The day was breaking,—the grey plain
 I rose from, silvered thick with dew.
 Was this a vision ? False or true ?
 Since then, three varied years are spent,
 And commonly my mind is bent
 To think it was a dream—be sure
 A mere dream and distemperature—
 The last day's watching : then the night,—
 The shock of that strange Northern Light

Set my head swimming, bred in me
 A dream. And so I live, you see,
 Go through the world, try, prove, reject,
 Prefer, still struggling to effect
 My warfare ; happy that I can
 Be crossed and thwarted as a man,
 Not left in God's contempt apart,
 With ghastly smooth life, dead at heart,
 Tame in earth's paddock as her prize.
 Thank God, she still each method tries
 To catch me, who may yet escape,
 She knows, the fiend in angel's shape !
 Thank God, no paradise stands barred
 To entry, and I find it hard
 To be a Christian, as I said !
 Still every now and then my head
 Raised glad, sinks mournful—all grows drear
 Spite of the sunshine, while I fear
 And think, " How dreadful to be grudged
 " No ease henceforth, as one that's judged,
 " Condemned to earth for ever, shut
 " From heaven ! "

But Easter-Day breaks ! But
 Christ rises ! Mercy every way
 Is infinite,—and who can say ?



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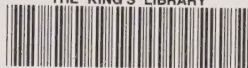
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